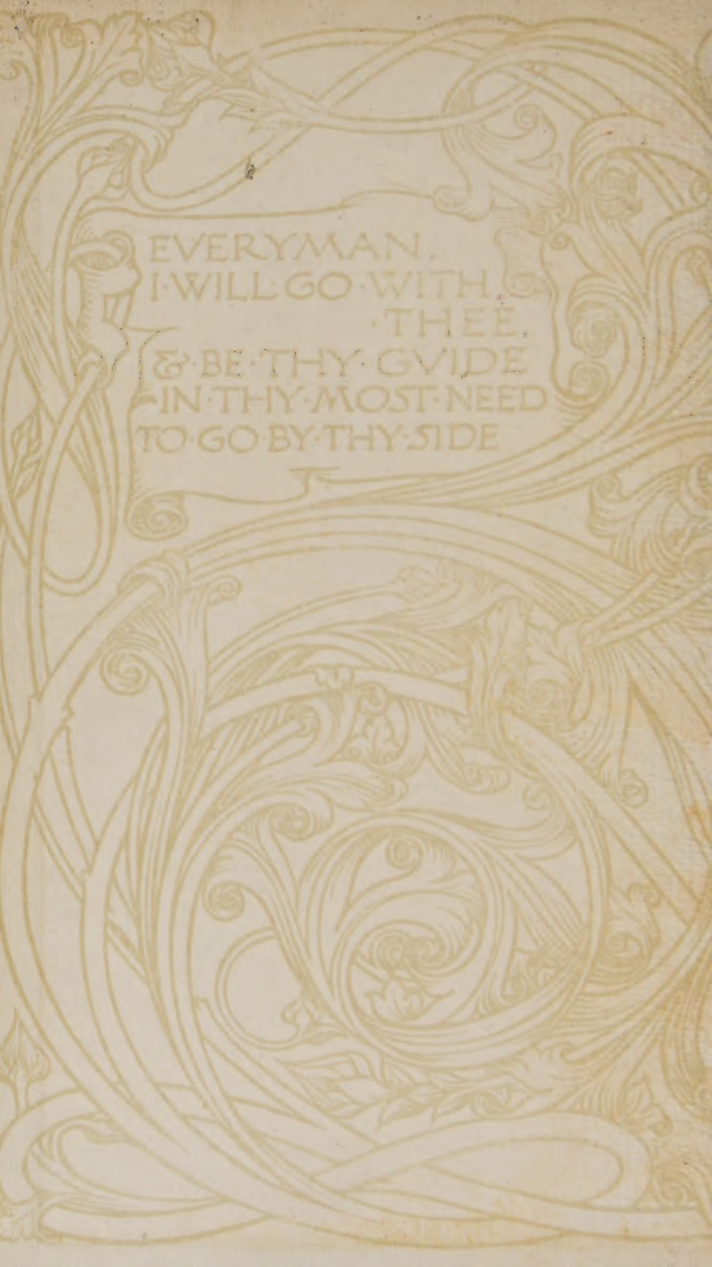
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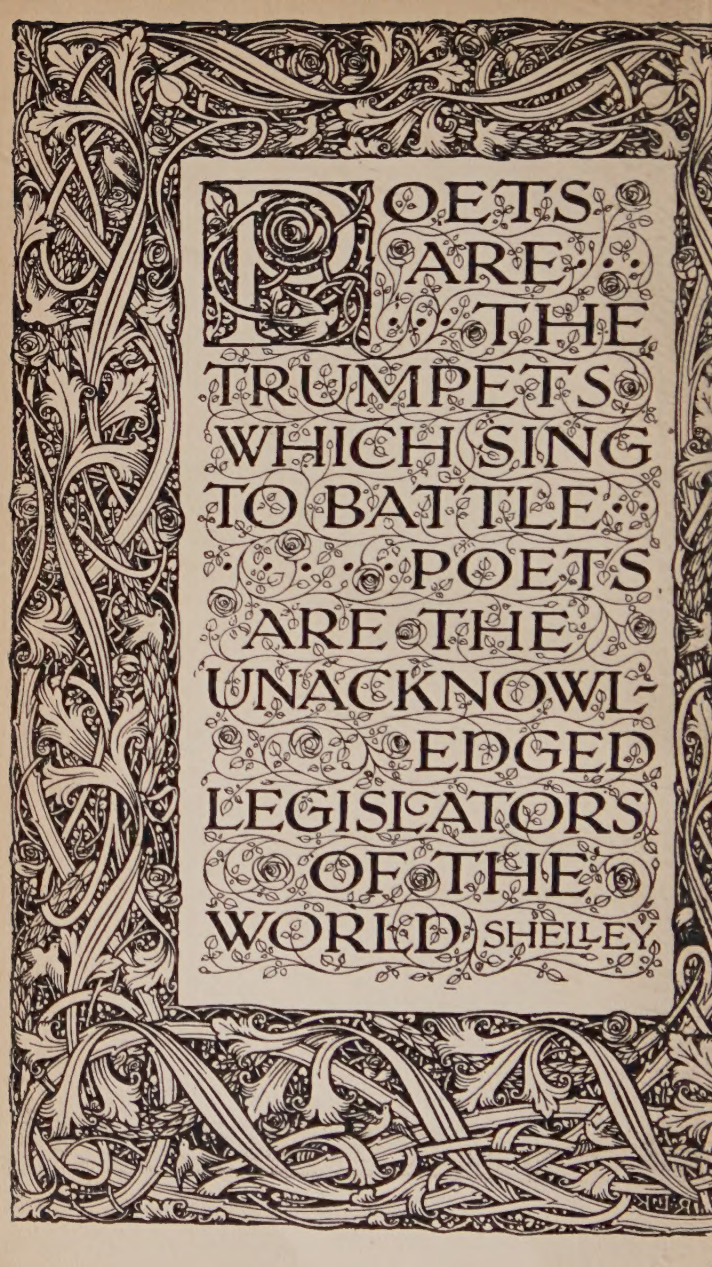
POETS ARE THE TRUMPETS WHICH SING TO BATTLE
POETS ARE THE UNACKNOWLEDGED LEGISLATORS OF THE WORLD
SHELLEY

A DOLL'S HOUSE: *and two other Plays by* HENRIK IBSEN

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INTRODUCTION

HENRIK IBSEN was born, on 20th March 1828, at Skien, a small Norwegian town which concerned itself solely with the timber trade. About eight years later his father's means, which had originally been easy, were suddenly and disastrously reduced. The family had to remove to humbler quarters and live in a very small way, and thus the boy had an early initiation into the privation that was to be his lot in life for many years. One of his few pleasures in these early days was the possession, which was allowed to him undisturbed, of an attic in his father's house. Here he could rummage at will, we are told by Mr. Gosse, amongst "some dreary old books, amongst others Harrison's folio *History of the City of London*, as well as a paint-box, an hour-glass, and an extinct eight-day clock, properties which were faithfully introduced, half a century later, into *The Wild Duck*."

As a youth, Ibsen displayed some talent for painting, and, when he left school at fifteen, was anxious to be an artist. But poverty forbade, and for five years he was apprenticed to an apothecary. By the end of that time his literary gifts had begun to assert themselves, and his soul, stirred by the revolutionary wave that was spreading over Europe, unburdened itself in poetry. It was not long before the irksomeness of life in a small country town became insupportable by one who had ambitions, and in 1850 Ibsen managed to get to Christiania, where he eked out an existence by humble journalistic work. He had taken with him to Christiania a three-act blank verse tragedy, *Catilina*, which was published (under a pseudonym) in 1850 and fell still-born from the press. The efforts of friends, however, procured him an ap-

pointment as "stage-poet" to the Bergen theatre; and after five years there (during which time one or two immature plays of his own were performed) he returned to Christiania to be "artistic director" of the new Norwegian theatre that had been established in rivalry with the old house. Except for the fact that his duties brought him some valuable experience of the technical side of the drama, the Christiania venture was disastrous to him. Ill luck and rebuffs pursued him; his theatre went bankrupt; and he was driven often back upon his painting to earn the price of a meal. Eventually he was forced to accept an offer of employment at the old theatre. He made repeated efforts to obtain a civil-list pension, but this was for a long time refused him, owing to the soreness produced in official quarters by the freedom with which Ibsen had, in his writings, satirised officialdom.

Having, by his uncompromising independence of temperament, made Norway too hot to hold him, Ibsen became a voluntary exile in 1864, and did not return to his own country (save for two brief visits) till some five and twenty years afterwards. The first four of these years were spent in Italy, the others mainly in Germany. The effect of a wider life was not long in making itself evident. From Italy *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, two magnificent "dramatic poems," came in successive years to astonish Ibsen's compatriots and make him famous. The long demanded pension could no longer be withheld, and Ibsen's time of penury was over. In 1877 he began to write the series of prose plays on which his wider reputation rests, the last of them being published in 1900, when their author was an old man of seventy-two.

Ibsen returned to his own people in 1891 and settled in Christiania. Returning with a European reputation, he somewhat grimly enjoyed the hero-worship showered

upon him by a people who had formerly made an outcast of him. In 1898 his seventieth birthday was celebrated with enthusiastic honours, and in the following year a statue of him was erected outside the Christiania theatre. When he died, after a long illness, in May 1906, he was accorded a public funeral.

A Doll's House (*Et Dukkehjem*), the earliest of Ibsen's "social dramas," was the first of his works to compel attention outside of Scandinavia. His reputation at home had gradually grown through a series of romantic and historical plays of less eventual importance, and had been sealed by the immense success of his *Brand*, which was published in 1866. From that point in his career, his work took mainly the form of political or social satire, for which he found an abundance of themes in the narrow and self-satisfied provincialism of Norwegian town-life. *A Doll's House* was written in 1879, when Ibsen was fifty-one, and published in December of that year. Shortly afterwards it was acted in Copenhagen. It was first seen in London in 1889, and in Paris in 1894; subsequently it has been widely translated, and the part of Nora (its heroine) has been included in the repertory of more than one world-famous actress.

The theme of the play, with its insistence on the woman's right to individual self-development, provoked a storm of discussion, and, in many quarters, an outpouring of violent abuse. The latter was possibly a good deal due to the fact that in this play (as, afterwards, in *Ghosts*) Ibsen seems unable to keep away from the topic of disease in its hereditary aspect. In *A Doll's House*, however, the topic is by no means essential to the scheme of the play as it is in *Ghosts*. The subject of *A Doll's House*—the awakening to the sense of individual responsibility on the part of a woman who has always been treated as a spoilt child — was of itself

sufficient matter for any amount of discussion. Whether Nora acted rightly or wrongly, naturally or unnaturally, in leaving husband, home and children in order to develop her own "individuality"; whether her casting herself adrift was indispensable to her development—all this was hotly debated. Though it may seem to some that, in his statement of the case, Ibsen thinks too much of a woman's rights and too little of her duties, it must be borne in mind that in all his "social plays" he contented himself with stating problems as they appeared to him, and did not attempt to answer them. His reply to those who accused him of a merely destructive philosophy was that his task, as he conceived it, was to point out the weaknesses of the social fabric, and to leave constructive philosophy to those who were not dramatists. He diagnosed, and left the cure to others. Moreover, however sound or unsound his theory of Nora's action may seem to us, it must be remembered to his credit that Ibsen, in spite of his enthusiastic advocacy of a woman's right to the development of her own individuality, would never give any countenance to the self-styled "emancipated" woman. He had no patience with those whose idea of self-development seems to consist chiefly in the abandonment of the sphere in which woman is pre-eminent and the invasion of spheres for which she is organically unsuited. Women, he used to maintain, must inevitably in the future have an immense influence in the practical world; but as mothers, and as mothers only.

In the matter of technique, *A Doll's House* marks a turning-point in the history of European drama. Twenty years have made us so accustomed to the results of the revolution worked by Ibsen's dramatic method, that it is not easy to realise how complete the revolution was. Naturalness of dialogue and

situation; adherence to the "unities" of time and place; the disappearance of such artificialities as the soliloquy; the avoidance of a happy ending when such an outcome is illogical—all this has become so familiar to us, and so inevitably a condition of any drama to be written nowadays, that we are apt to forget that the change dates from the year when an enthusiastic band of pioneers gave the first performance of *A Doll's House* outside of Scandinavia.

The Wild Duck (*Vildanden*), which was published in 1884 and first acted early in 1885, represents a different mental attitude on Ibsen's part. In the five years which had elapsed since the appearance of *A Doll's House*, the controversy which that play had aroused had been intensified a hundredfold by *Ghosts*, which followed it. Ibsen was the target for the fiercest attacks from his own people, to whom in retort he sent *An Enemy of the People*, a play charged with a mordant satire that added fuel to the flames. *The Wild Duck* seems to have been written in a condition of mental reaction after the heat of battle, when Ibsen was able to appreciate the irony of the situation. The play is, in effect, substantially a satire on some of his most fervently expressed theories, and, incidentally, of the "Ibsenites." The character of Gregers Werle satirises the unthinking reformers who would enforce an unpractical ideal of absolute sincerity and truthfulness. In his obedience to the "demand of the ideal," Gregers brings about a misery which ends in tragedy. A truthfulness that admits of no compromise wrecks a family's peace; insistence on the beauty of self-sacrifice leads to the suicide of a young and innocent life. In the end the reformer is confronted with the hard fact that, in this world, the ideal and the practical often can only be reconciled by compromise, and that the well-meaning busybody is responsible for a deal of

mischief. It can scarcely be doubted that there are, in the exposition of Gregers' character, many sly hits at Ibsen himself and his usually uncompromising philosophy of life. Even such details as Gregers' unfortunate attempt to "do everything for himself" in his room, suggest some of the author's idiosyncrasies. Ibsen used to insist on sewing on his own buttons when they came off his clothes, maintaining that women could not sew them on firmly. (His wife, however, divulged the fact that she used to go surreptitiously to his room when he had done, and "finish them off"—a process, very necessary to the durability of the sewing, that he usually forgot!) On one occasion he considerably startled a friend of his, late in life, by asking him suddenly whether he blacked his own boots.

The whole trend of *The Wild Duck* suggests that the storm of controversy that had raged round *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* had awakened Ibsen to the inevitableness of compromise in daily existence, if disaster is to be averted. In technical skill the play is his masterpiece; indeed, it would be difficult to name any modern drama that is its superior in construction, characterisation, and absolute naturalness and aptness of dialogue. The skill with which, as the play progresses, the audience is made aware, little by little, of the tragedy that is past before the play opens, is the more striking the more it is examined; and it is accomplished without any sacrifice of probability in action or speech. The only weak point in the play lies in the "symbolism" of the Wild Duck itself. Symbolism, especially when it descends to detail, is usually a mistake in the acted drama, and in this case its purport is too vague for it to be of any value. It is by no means clear which of the characters the Wild Duck is meant to symbolise; moreover, the symbolism is not essential to the develop-

ment of the play, which would be the only justification for its use.

A more general and less detailed symbolism may produce a dramatic effect in the way of general "atmosphere," as it does to some extent (though, again, by no means as an indispensable ingredient) in the third play in this collection. *The Lady from the Sea* (*Fruen fra Havet*), was only published in 1888, but had been planned long before *The Wild Duck*, a fact which may explain its inferiority to that play in dramatic quality. It is not of the same stuff as Ibsen's "social dramas." It is a mixture of psychology and poetic fancy surrounding one of Ibsen's haunting principles—that an action is only valuable and reasonable if it be the spontaneous outcome of the individual will. The "Lady from the Sea's" shadowy sense of the attraction of the sea, coupled with the incident of the half-betrothal to the mysterious "Stranger" and her temporary infatuation to leave her husband for him, are really only embroideries round the theme of the play. That theme is the psychological development of an idle woman who has nothing particular to occupy her life. She frets at the restrictions of wifely duty upon which her husband would insist; until, when he realises the situation sufficiently to remove his restrictions, and the idea of compulsion is gone, the woman's mental attitude correspondingly alters. She now finds no attraction in forbidden fruit, and a strong attraction in her obvious duty.

The translation of *The Lady from the Sea* is that of Mrs. Marx-Aveling; for those of *A Doll's House* and *The Wild Duck* I am responsible.

R. Farquharson Sharp.

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A DOLL'S HOUSE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Torvald Helmer.
Nora, his wife.
Doctor Rank.
Mrs. Linde.
Nils Krogstad.
Helmer's three young children
Anne, their nurse.
A Housemaid.
A Porter.

(*The action takes place in Helmer's house.*)

A DOLL'S HOUSE

ACT I

(SCENE.—*A room furnished comfortably and tastefully, but not extravagantly. At the back, a door to the right leads to the entrance-hall, another to the left leads to Helmer's study. Between the doors stands a piano. In the middle of the left-hand wall is a door, and beyond it a window. Near the window are a round table, arm-chairs and a small sofa. In the right-hand wall, at the farther end, another door; and on the same side, nearer the footlights, a stove, two easy chairs and a rocking-chair; between the stove and the door, a small table. Engravings on the walls; a cabinet with china and other small objects; a small book-case with well-bound books. The floors are carpeted, and a fire burns in the stove. It is winter.*

A bell rings in the hall; shortly afterwards the door is heard to open. Enter NORA, *humming a tune and in high spirits. She is in out-door dress and carries a number of parcels; these she lays on the table to the right. She leaves the outer door open after her, and through it is seen a* PORTER *who is carrying a Christmas Tree and a basket, which he gives to the* MAID *who has opened the door*).

Nora. Hide the Christmas Tree carefully, Helen. Be sure the children do not see it till this evening, when it is dressed. (*To the* PORTER, *taking out her purse.*) How much?

Porter. Sixpence.

Nora. There is a shilling. No, keep the change. (*The* PORTER *thanks her, and goes out.* NORA *shuts the door. She is laughing to herself, as she takes off her hat and coat. She takes a packet of macaroons from her pocket and eats one or two; then goes cautiously to her husband's door and listens.*) Yes, he is in. (*Still humming, she goes to the table on the right.*)

Helmer (*calls out from his room*). Is that my little lark twittering out there?

Nora (*busy opening some of the parcels*). Yes, it is!

Helmer. Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

Nora. Yes!

Helmer. When did my squirrel come home?

Nora. Just now. (*Puts the bag of macaroons into her pocket and wipes her mouth.*) Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

Helmer. Don't disturb me. (*A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.*) Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

Nora. Yes but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economise.

Helmer. Still, you know, we can't spend money recklessly.

Nora. Yes, Torvald, we may be a wee bit more reckless now, mayn't we? Just a tiny wee bit! You are going to have a big salary and earn lots and lots of money.

Helmer. Yes, after the New Year; but then it will be a whole quarter before the salary is due.

Nora. Pooh! we can borrow till then.

Helmer. Nora! (*Goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*) The same little featherhead! Suppose, now, that I borrowed fifty pounds to-day, and you spent it all in the Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a slate fell on my head and killed me, and—

Nora (*putting her hands over his mouth*). Oh! don't say such horrid things.

Helmer. Still, suppose that happened,—what then?

Nora. If that were to happen, I don't suppose I should care whether I owed money or not.

Helmer. Yes, but what about the people who had lent it?

Nora. They? Who would bother about them? I should not know who they were.

Helmer. That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no

borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle.

Nora (*moving towards the stove*). As you please, Torvald.

Helmer (*following her*). Come, come, my little skylark must not droop her wings. What is this! Is my little squirrel out of temper? (*Taking out his purse.*) Nora, what do you think I have got here?

Nora (*turning round quickly*). Money!

Helmer. There you are. (*Gives her some money.*) Do you think I don't know what a lot is wanted for housekeeping at Christmas-time?

Nora (*counting*). Ten shillings — a pound — two pounds! Thank you, thank you, Torvald; that will keep me going for a long time.

Helmer. Indeed it must.

Nora. Yes, yes, it will. But come here and let me show you what I have bought. And all so cheap! Look, here is a new suit for Ivar, and a sword; and a horse and a trumpet for Bob; and a doll and dolly's bedstead for Emmy,—they are very plain, but anyway she will soon break them in pieces. And here are dress-lengths and handkerchiefs for the maids; old Anne ought really to have something better.

Helmer. And what is in this parcel?

Nora (*crying out*). No, no! you mustn't see that till this evening.

Helmer. Very well. But now tell me, you extravagant little person, what would you like for yourself?

Nora. For myself? Oh, I am sure I don't want anything.

Helmer. Yes, but you must. Tell me something reasonable that you would particularly like to have.

Nora. No, I really can't think of anything—unless, Torvald—

Helmer. Well?

Nora (*playing with his coat buttons, and without raising her eyes to his*). If you really want to give me something, you might—you might—

Helmer. Well, out with it!

Nora (*speaking quickly*). You might give me money, Torvald. Only just as much as you can afford; and then one of these days I will buy something with it.

Helmer. But, Nora—

Nora. Oh, do! dear Torwald; please, please do! Then I will wrap it up in beautiful gilt paper and hang it on the Christmas Tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

Helmer. What are little people called that are always wasting money?

Nora. Spendthrifts—I know. Let us do as you suggest, Torvald, and then I shall have time to think what I am most in want of. That is a very sensible plan, isn't it?

Helmer (*smiling*). Indeed it is—that is to say, if you were really to save out of the money I give you, and then really buy something for yourself. But if you spend it all on the housekeeping and any number of unnecessary things, than I merely have to pay up again.

Nora. Oh but, Torvald—

Helmer. You can't deny it, my dear little Nora. (*Puts his arm round her waist.*) It's a sweet little spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such little persons are!

Nora. It's a shame to say that. I do really save all I can.

Helmer (*laughing*). That's very true,—all you can. But you can't save anything!

Nora (*smiling quietly and happily*). You haven't any idea how many expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Torvald.

Helmer. You are an odd little soul. Very like your father. You always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, and, as soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is

in the blood; for indeed it is true that you can inherit these things, Nora.

Nora. Ah, I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

Helmer. And I would not wish you to be anything but just what you are, my sweet little skylark. But, do you know, it strikes me that you are looking rather—what shall I say—rather uneasy to-day?

Nora. Do I?

Helmer. You do, really. Look straight at me.

Nora (*looks at him*). Well?

Helmer (*wagging his finger at her*). Hasn't Miss Sweet-Tooth been breaking rules in town to-day?

Nora. No; what makes you think that?

Helmer. Hasn't she paid a visit to the confectioner's?

Nora. No, I assure you, Torvald—

Helmer. Not been nibbling sweets?

Nora. No, certainly not.

Helmer. Not even taken a bite at a macaroon or two?

Nora. No, Torvald, I assure you really—

Helmer. There, there, of course I was only joking.

Nora (*going to the table on the right*). I should not think of going against your wishes.

Helmer. No, I am sure of that; besides, you gave me your word—(*Going up to her.*) Keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, my darling. They will all be revealed to-night when the Christmas Tree is lit, no doubt.

Nora. Did you remember to invite Doctor Rank?

Helmer. No. But there is no need; as a matter of course he will come to dinner with us. However, I will ask him when he comes in this morning. I have ordered some good wine. Nora, you can't think how I am looking forward to this evening.

Nora. So am I! And how the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

Helmer. It is splendid to feel that one has a perfectly safe appointment, and a big enough income. It's delightful to think of, isn't it?

Nora. It's wonderful!

Helmer. Do you remember last Christmas? For a full three weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening till long after midnight, making ornaments for the Christmas Tree and all the other fine things that were to be a surprise to us. It was the dullest three weeks I ever spent!

Nora. I didn't find it dull.

Helmer (*smiling*). But there was precious little result, Nora.

Nora. Oh, you shouldn't tease me about that again! How could I help the cat's going in and tearing everything to pieces?

Helmer. Of course you couldn't, poor little girl. You had the best of intentions to please us all, and that's the main thing. But it is a good thing that our hard times are over.

Nora. Yes, it is really wonderful.

Helmer. This time I needn't sit here and be dull all alone, and you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands—

Nora (*clapping her hands*). No, Torvald, I needn't any longer, need I! It's wonderfully lovely to hear you say so! (*Taking his arm.*) Now I will tell you how I have been thinking we ought to arrange things, Torvald. As soon as Christmas is over— (*A bell rings in the hall.*) There's the bell. (*She tidies the room a little.*) There's someone at the door. What a nuisance!

Helmer. If it is a caller, remember I am not at home.

Maid (*in the doorway*). A lady to see you, ma'am,—a stranger.

Nora. Ask her to come in.

Maid (*to* HELMER). The doctor came at the same time, sir.

Helmer. Did he go straight into my room?

Maid. Yes, sir.

(HELMER *goes into his room.* *The* MAID *ushers in* MRS. LINDE, *who is in travelling dress, and shuts the door.*)

Mrs. Linde (*in a dejected and timid voice*). How do you do, Nora?

Nora (*doubtfully*). How do you do—

Mrs. Linde. You don't recognise me, I suppose.

Nora. No, I don't know—yes, to be sure, I seem to—(*Suddenly.*) Yes! Christine! Is it really you?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, it is I.

Nora. Christine! To think of my not recognising you! And yet how could I— (*In a gentle voice.*) How you have altered, Christine!

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I have indeed. In nine, ten long years—

Nora. Is it so long since we met? I suppose it is. The last eight years have been a happy time for me, I can tell you. And so now you have come into the town, and have taken this long journey in winter—that was plucky of you.

Mrs. Linde. I arrived by steamer this morning.

Nora. To have some fun at Christmas-time, of course. How delightful! We will have such fun together! But take off your things. You are not cold, I hope. (*Helps her.*) Now we will sit down by the stove, and be cosy. No, take this arm-chair; I will sit here in the rocking-chair. (*Takes her hands.*) Now you look like your old self again; it was only the first moment— You are a little paler, Christine, and perhaps a little thinner.

Mrs. Linde. And much, much older, Nora.

Nora. Perhaps a little older; very, very little; certainly not much. (*Stops suddenly and speaks seriously.*) What a thoughtless creature I am, chattering away like this. My poor, dear Christine, do forgive me.

Mrs. Linde. What do you mean, Nora.

Nora (*gently*). Poor Christine, you are a widow.

Mrs. Linde. Yes; it is three years ago now.

Nora. Yes, I knew; I saw it in the papers. I assure you, Christine, I meant ever so often to write to you at the time, but I always put it off and something always prevented me.

Mrs. Linde. I quite understand, dear.

Nora. It was very bad of me, Christine. Poor thing, how you must have suffered. And he left you nothing?

Mrs. Linde. No.

Nora. And no children?

Mrs. Linde. No.

Nora. Nothing at all, then.

Mrs. Linde. Not even any sorrow or grief to liv upon.

Nora (*looking incredulously at her*). But, Christine, i that possible?

Mrs. Linde (*smiles sadly and strokes her hair*). I sometimes happens, Nora.

Nora. So you are quite alone. How dreadfully sa that must be. I have three lovely children. You can' see them just now, for they are out with their nurse But now you must tell me all about it.

Mrs. Linde. No, no; I want to hear about you.

Nora. No, you must begin. I mustn't be selfish to day; to-day I must only think of your affairs. But there is one thing I must tell you. Do you know we have just had a great piece of good luck?

Mrs. Linde. No, what is it?

Nora. Just fancy, my husband has been made manager of the Bank!

Mrs. Linde. Your husband? What good luck!

Nora. Yes, tremendous! A barrister's profession is such an uncertain thing, especially if he won't undertake unsavoury cases; and naturally Torvald has never been willing to do that, and I quite agree with him. You may imagine how pleased we are! He is to take up his work in the Bank at the New Year, and then he will have a big salary and lots of commissions. For the future we can live quite differently—we can do just as we like. I feel so relieved and so happy, Christine! It will be splendid to have heaps of money and not need to have any anxiety, won't it?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, anyhow I think it would be delightful to have what one needs.

Nora. No, not only what one needs, but heaps and heaps of money.

Mrs. Linde (*smiling*). Nora, Nora, haven't you learnt sense yet? In our schooldays you were a great spendthrift.

Nora (*laughing*). Yes, that is what Torvald says now (*Wags her finger at her.*) But "Nora, Nora" is not so silly as you think. We have not been in a position for me to waste money. We have both had to work.

Mrs. Linde. You too?

Nora. Yes; odds and ends, needlework, crotchet-work, embroidery, and that kind of thing. (*Dropping her voice.*) And other things as well. You know Torvald left his office when we were married? There was no prospect of promotion there, and he had to try and earn more than before. But during the first year he overwoked himself dreadfully. You see, he had to make money every way he could, and he worked early and late; but he couldn't stand it, and fell dreadfully ill, and the doctors said it was necessary for him to go south.

Mrs. Linde. You spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you?

Nora. Yes. It was no easy matter to get away, I can tell you. It was just after Ivar was born; but naturally we had to go. It was a wonderfully beautiful journey, and it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a tremendous lot of money, Christine.

Mrs Linde. So I should think.

Nora. It cost about two hundred and fifty pounds. That's a lot, isn't it?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, and in emergencies like that it is lucky to have the money.

Nora. I ought to tell you that we had it from papa.

Mrs. Linde. Oh, I see. It was just about that time that he died, wasn't it.

Nora. Yes; and, just think of it, I couldn't go and nurse him. I was expecting little Ivar's birth every day and I had my poor sick Torvald to look after. My dear, kind father—I never saw him again, Christine. That was the saddest time I have known since our marriage.

Mrs. Linde. I know how fond you were of him. And then you went off to Italy?

Nora. Yes; you see we had money then, and the doctors insisted on our going, so we started a month later.

Mrs. Linde. And your husband came back quite well?

Nora. As sound as a bell!

Mrs. Linde. But—the doctor?

Nora. What doctor?

Mrs. Linde. I thought your maid said the gentleman who arrived here just as I did, was the doctor?

Nora. Yes, that was Doctor Rank, but he doesn't come here professionally. He is our greatest friend, and comes in at least once every day. No, Torvald has not had an hour's illness since then, and our children are strong and healthy and so am I. (*Jumps up and claps her hands.*) Christine! Christine! it's good to be alive and happy!—But how horrid of me; I am talking of nothing but my own affairs. (*Sits on a stool near her, and rests her arms on her knees.*) You mustn't be angry with me. Tell me, is it really true that you did not love your husband? Why did you marry him?

Mrs Linde. My mother was alive then, and was bedridden and helpless, and I had to provide for my two younger brothers; so I did not think I was justified in refusing his offer.

Nora. No, perhaps you were quite right. He was rich at that time, then?

Mrs. Linde. I believe he was quite well off. But his business was a precarious one; and, when he died, it all went to pieces and there was nothing left.

Nora. And then?—

Mrs. Linde. Well, I had to turn my hand to anything I could find—first a small shop, then a small school, and so on. The last three years have seemed like one long working-day, with no rest. Now it is at an end, Nora. My poor mother needs me no more, for she is gone; and the boys do not need me either; they have got situations and can shift for themselves.

Nora. What a relief you must feel it—

Mrs. Linde. No, indeed; I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for any more. (*Gets up restlessly.*) That was why I could not stand the life in my little backwater any longer. I hope it may be easier

here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work—office work of some kind—

Nora. But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place.

Mrs. Linde (*walking to the window*). I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora.

Nora (*rising*). Oh, don't be angry with me.

Mrs. Linde (*going up to her*). It is you that must not be angry with me, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. No one to work for, and yet obliged to be always on the look-out for chances. One must live, and so one becomes selfish. When you told me of the happy turn your fortunes have taken—you will hardly believe it—I was delighted not so much on your account as on my own.

Nora. How do you mean?—Oh, I understand. You mean that perhaps Torvald could get you something to do.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, that was what I was thinking of.

Nora. He must, Christine. Just leave it to me; I will broach the subject very cleverly—I will think of something that will please him very much. It will make me so happy to be of some use to you.

Mrs. Linde. How kind you are, Nora, to be so anxious to help me! It is doubly kind in you, for you know so little of the burdens and troubles of life.

Nora. I—? I know so little of them?

Mrs. Linde (*smiling*). My dear! Small household cares and that sort of thing!—You are a child, Nora.

Nora (*tosses her head and crosses the stage*). You ought not to be so superior.

Mrs. Linde. No?

Nora. You are just like the others. They all think that I am incapable of anything really serious—

Mrs. Linde. Come, come—

Nora. —that I have gone through nothing in this world of cares.

Mrs. Linde. But, my dear Nora, you have just told me all your troubles.

Nora. Pooh!—those were trifles. (*Lowering her voice.*) I have not told you the important thing.

Mrs. Linde. The important thing? What do you mean?

Nora. You look down upon me altogether, Christine—but you ought not to. You are proud, aren't you, of having worked so hard and so long for your mother?

Mrs. Linde. Indeed, I don't look down on anyone. But it is true that I am both proud and glad to think that I was privileged to make the end of my mother's life almost free from care.

Nora. And you are proud to think of what you have done for your brothers.

Mrs. Linde. I think I have the right to be.

Nora. I think so, too. But now, listen to this; I too have something to be proud and glad of.

Mrs. Linde. I have no doubt you have. But what do you refer to?

Nora. Speak low. Suppose Torvald were to hear! He mustn't on any account—no one in the world must know, Christine, except you.

Mrs. Linde. But what is it?

Nora. Come here. (*Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.*) Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life.

Mrs. Linde. "Saved"? How?

Nora. I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would never have recovered if he had not gone there—

Mrs. Linde. Yes, but your father gave you the necessary funds.

Nora (*smiling*). Yes, that is what Torvald and all the others think, but—

Mrs. Linde. But—

Nora. Papa didn't give us a shilling. It was I who procured the money.

Mrs. Linde. You? All that large sum?

Nora. Two hundred and fifty pounds. What do you think of that?

Mrs. Linde. But, Nora, how could you possibly do it? Did you win a prize in the Lottery?

Nora (*contemptuously*). In the Lottery? There would have been no credit in that.

Mrs. Linde. But where did you get it from, then?

Nora (*humming and smiling with an air of mystery*) Hm, hm! Aha!

Mrs. Linde. Because you couldn't have borrowed it.

Nora. Couldn't I? Why not?

Mrs. Linde. No, a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent.

Nora (*tossing her head*). Oh, if it is a wife who has any head for business—a wife who has the wit to be a little bit clever—

Mrs. Linde. I don't understand it at all, Nora.

Nora. There is no need you should. I never said I had borrowed the money. I may have got it some other way. (*Lies back on the sofa.*) Perhaps I got it from some other admirer. When anyone is as attractive as I am—

Mrs. Linde. You are a mad creature.

Nora. Now, you know you're full of curiosity, Christine.

Mrs. Linde. Listen to me, Nora dear. Haven't you been a little bit imprudent?

Nora (*sits up straight*). Is it imprudent to save your husband's life?

Mrs. Linde. It seems to me imprudent, without his knowledge, to—

Nora. But it was absolutely necessary that he should not know! My goodness, can't you understand that? It was necessary he should have no idea what a dangerous condition he was in. It was to me that the doctors came and said that his life was in danger, and that the only thing to save him was to live in the south. Do you suppose I didn't try, first of all, to get what I wanted as if it were for myself? I told him how much I should love to travel abroad like other young wives; I tried tears and entreaties with him; I told him that he ought to remember the condition I was in, and that he ought to be kind and indulgent to me; I even hinted that he might raise a loan. That nearly made him angry,

Christine. He said I was thoughtless, and that it was his duty as my husband not to indulge me in my whims and caprices—as I believe he called them. Very well, I thought, you must be saved—and that was how I came to devise a way out of the difficulty—

Mrs. Linde. And did your husband never get to know from your father that the money had not come from him?

Nora. No, never. Papa died just at that time. I had meant to let him into the secret and beg him never to reveal it. But he was so ill then—alas, there never was any need to tell him.

Mrs. Linde. And since then have you never told your secret to your husband?

Nora. Good Heavens, no! How could you think so? A man who has such strong opinions about these things! And besides, how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly independence, to know that he owed me anything! It would upset our mutual relations altogether; our beautiful happy home would no longer be what it is now.

Mrs. Linde. Do you mean never to tell him about it?

Nora (*meditatively, and with a half smile*). Yes—some day, perhaps, after many years, when I am no longer as nice-looking as I am now. Don't laugh at me! I mean, of course, when Torvald is no longer as devoted to me as he is now; when my dancing and dressing-up and reciting have palled on him; then it may be a good thing to have something in reserve— (*Breaking off.*) What nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you think of my great secret, Christine? Do you still think I am of no use? I can tell you, too, that this affair has caused me a lot of worry. It has been by no means easy for me to meet my engagements punctually. I may tell you that there is something that is called, in business, quarterly interest, and another thing called payment in instalments, and it is always so dreadfully difficult to manage them. I have had to save a little here and there, where I could, you understand. I have not been able to put aside much from

my housekeeping money, for Torvald must have a good table. I couldn't let my children be shabbily dressed; I have felt obliged to use up all he gave me for them, the sweet little darlings!

Mrs. Linde. So it has all had to come out of your own necessaries of life, poor Nora?

Nora. Of course. Besides, I was the one responsible for it. Whenever Torvald has given me money for new dresses and such things, I have never spent more than half of it; I have always bought the simplest and cheapest things. Thank Heaven, any clothes look well on me, and so Torvald has never noticed it. But it was often very hard on me, Christine—because it is delightful to be really well dressed, isn't it?

Mrs. Linde. Quite so.

Nora. Well, then I have found other ways of earning money. Last winter I was lucky enough to get a lot of copying to do; so I locked myself up and sat writing every evening until quite late at night. Many a time I was desperately tired; but all the same it was a tremendous pleasure to sit there working and earning money. It was like being a man.

Mrs. Linde. How much have you been able to pay off in that way?

Nora. I can't tell you exactly. You see, it is very difficult to keep an account of a business matter of that kind. I only know that I have paid every penny that I could scrape together. Many a time I was at my wits' end. (*Smiles*). Then I used to sit here and imagine that a rich old gentleman had fallen in love with me—

Mrs. Linde. What! Who was it?

Nora. Be quiet!—that he had died; and that when his will was opened it contained, written in big letters, the instruction: "The lovely Mrs Nora Helmer is to have all I possess paid over to her at once in cash."

Mrs. Linde. But, my dear Nora—who could the man be?

Nora. Good gracious, can't you understand? There was no old gentleman at all; it was only something

that I used to sit here and imagine, when I couldn't think of any way of procuring money. But it's all the same now; the tiresome old person can stay where he is, as far as I am concerned; I don't care about him or his will either, for I am free from care now. (*Jumps up.*) My goodness, it's delightful to think of, Christine! Free from care! To be able to be free from care, quite free from care; to be able to play and romp with the children; to be able to keep the house beautifully and have everything just as Torvald likes it! And, think of it, soon the spring will come and the big blue sky! Perhaps we shall be able to take a little trip—perhaps I shall see the sea again! Oh, it's a wonderful thing to be alive and be happy. (*A bell is heard in the hall.*)

Mrs. Linde (*rising*). There is the bell; perhaps I had better go.

Nora. No, don't go; no one will come in here; it is sure to be for Torvald.

Servant (*at the hall door*). Excuse me, ma'am—there is a gentleman to see the master, and as the doctor is with him—

Nora. Who is it?

Krogstad (*at the door*). It is I, Mrs. Helmer. (Mrs. LINDE *starts, trembles, and turns to the window.*)

Nora (*takes a step towards him, and speaks in a strained, low voice*). You? What is it? What do you want to see my husband about?

Krogstad. Bank business—in a way. I have a small post in the Bank, and I hear your husband is to be our chief now—

Nora. Then it is—

Krogstad. Nothing but dry business matters, Mrs. Helmer; absolutely nothing else.

Nora. Be so good as to go into the study, then. (*She bows indifferently to him and shuts the door into the hall; then comes back and makes up the fire in the stove.*

Mrs. Linde. Nora—who was that man?

Nora. A lawyer, of the name of Krogstad.

Mrs. Linde. Then it really was he.

Nora. Do you know the man?

Mrs. Linde. I used to—many years ago. At one time he was a solicitor's clerk in our town.

Nora. Yes, he was.

Mrs. Linde. He is greatly altered.

Nora. He made a very unhappy marriage.

Mrs. Linde. He is a widower now, isn't he?

Nora. With several children. There now, it is burning up. (*Shuts the door of the stove and moves the rocking-chair aside.*)

Mrs. Linde. They say he carries on various kinds of business.

Nora. Really! Perhaps he does; I don't know anything about it. But don't let us think of business; it is so tiresome.

Doctor Rank (*comes out of* HELMER'S *study. Before he shuts the door he calls to him*). No, my dear fellow, I won't disturb you; I would rather go in to your wife for a little while. (*Shuts the door and sees* Mrs. LINDE.) I beg your pardon; I am afraid I am disturbing you too.

Nora. No, not at all. (*Introducing him.*) Doctor Rank, Mrs. Linde.

Rank. I have often heard Mrs. Linde's name mentioned here. I think I passed you on the stairs when I arrived, Mrs. Linde?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I go up very slowly; I can't manage stairs well.

Rank. Ah! some slight internal weakness?

Mrs. Linde. No, the fact is I have been overworking myself.

Rank. Nothing more than that? Then I suppose you have come to town to amuse yourself with our entertainments?

Mrs. Linde. I have come to look for work.

Rank. Is that a good cure for overwork?

Mrs. Linde. One must live, Doctor Rank.

Rank. Yes, the general opinion seems to be that it is necessary.

Nora. Look here, Doctor Rank—you know you want to live.

Rank. Certainly. However wretched I may feel, I

want to prolong the agony as long as possible. All my patients are like that. And so are those who are morally diseased; one of them, and a bad case too, is at this very moment with Helmer—

Mrs. Linde (*sadly*). Ah!

Nora. Whom do you mean?

Rank. A lawyer of the name of Krogstad, a fellow you don't know at all. He suffers from a diseased moral character, Mrs. Helmer; but even he began talking of its being highly important that he should live.

Nora. Did he? What did he want to speak to Torvald about?

Rank. I have no idea; I only heard that it was something about the Bank.

Nora. I didn't know this—what's his name—Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank.

Rank. Yes, he has some sort of appointment there. (*To* Mrs. LINDE.) I don't know whether you find also in your part of the world that there are certain people who go zealously snuffing about to smell out moral corruption, and, as soon as they have found some, put the person concerned into some lucrative position where they can keep their eye on him. Healthy natures are left out in the cold.

Mrs. Linde. Still I think the sick are those who most need taking care of.

Rank (*shrugging his shoulders*). Yes, there you are. That is the sentiment that is turning Society into a sick-house.

(NORA, *who has been absorbed in her thoughts, breaks out into smothered laughter and claps her hands.*)

Rank. Why do you laugh at that? Have you any notion what Society really is?

Nora. What do I care about tiresome Society? I am laughing at something quite different, something extremely amusing. Tell me, Doctor Rank, are all the people who are employed in the Bank dependent on Torvald now?

Rank. Is that what you find so extremely amusing?

Nora (*smiling and humming*). That's my affair! (*Walking about the room.*) It's perfectly glorious to

think that we have—that Torvald has so much power over so many people. (*Takes the packet from her pocket.*) Doctor Rank, what do you say to a macaroon?

Rank. What, macaroons? I thought they were forbidden here.

Nora. Yes, but these are some Christine gave me.

Mrs. Linde. What! I?—

Nora. Oh, well, don't be alarmed! You couldn't know that Torvald had forbidden them. I must tell you that he is afraid they will spoil my teeth. But, bah!—once in a way— That's so, isn't it, Doctor Rank? By your leave! (*Puts a macaroon into his mouth.*) You must have one too, Christine. And I shall have one, just a little one—or at most two. (*Walking about.*) I am tremendously happy. There is just one thing in the world now that I should dearly love to do.

Rank. Well, what is that?

Nora. It's something I should dearly love to say, if Torvald could hear me.

Rank. Well, why can't you say it?

Nora. No, I daren't; it's so shocking.

Mrs. Linde. Shocking?

Rank. Well, I should not advise you to say it. Still, with us you might. What is it you would so much like to say if Torvald could hear you?

Nora. I should just love to say—Well, I'm damned!

Rank. Are you mad?

Mrs. Linde. Nora, dear—!

Rank. Say it, here he is!

Nora (*hiding the packet*). Hush! Hush! Hush! (HELMER *comes out of his room, with his coat over his arm and his hat in his hand.*)

Nora. Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him?

Helmer. Yes, he has just gone.

Nora. Let me introduce you—this is Christine, who has come to town.

Helmer. Christine—? Excuse me, but I don't know—

Nora. Mrs. Linde, dear; Christine Linde.

Helmer. Of course. A school friend of my wife's, I presume?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, we have known each other since then.

Nora. And just think, she has taken a long journey in order to see you.

Helmer. What do you mean?

Mrs. Linde. No, really, I—

Nora. Christine is tremendously clever at book-keeping, and she is frightfully anxious to work under some clever man, so as to perfect herself—

Helmer. Very sensible, Mrs. Linde.

Nora. And when she heard you had been appointed manager of the Bank—the news was telegraphed, you know—she travelled here as quick as she could, Torvald, I am sure you will be able to do something for Christine, for my sake, won't you?

Helmer. Well, it is not altogether impossible. I presume you are a widow, Mrs. Linde?

Mrs. Linde. Yes.

Helmer. And have had some experience of book-keeping?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, a fair amount.

Helmer. Ah! well, it's very likely I may be able to find something for you—

Nora (*clapping her hands*). What did I tell you? What did I tell you?

Helmer. You have just come at a fortunate moment, Mrs. Linde.

Mrs. Linde. How am I to thank you?

Helmer. There is no need. (*Puts on his coat.*) But to-day you must excuse me—

Rank. Wait a minute; I will come with you. (*Brings his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.*)

Nora. Don't be long away, Torvald dear.

Helmer. About an hour, not more.

Nora. Are you going too, Christine?

Mrs. Linde (*putting on her cloak*). Yes, I must go and look for a room.

Helmer. Oh, well then, we can walk down the street together.

Nora (*helping her*). What a pity it is we are so

short of space here; I am afraid it is impossible for us—

Mrs. Linde. Please don't think of it! Good-bye, Nora dear, and many thanks.

Nora. Good-bye for the present. Of course you will come back this evening. And you too, Dr. Rank. What do you say? If you are well enough? Oh, you must be! Wrap yourself up well. (*They go to the door all talking together. Children's voices are heard on the staircase.*)

Nora. There they are! There they are! (*She runs to open the door. The* NURSE *comes in with the children.*) Come in! Come in! (*Stoops and kisses them.*) Oh, you sweet blessings! Look at them, Christine! Aren't they darlings?

Rank. Don't let us stand here in the draught.

Helmer. Come along, Mrs. Linde; the place will only be bearable for a mother now!

(RANK, HELMER, *and* MRS. LINDE *go downstairs. The* NURSE *comes forward with the children;* NORA *shuts the hall door.*)

Nora. How fresh and well you look! Such red cheeks!—like apples and roses. (*The children all talk at once while she speaks to them.*) Have you had great fun? That's splendid! What, you pulled both Emmy and Bob along on the sledge?—both at once?—that *was* good. You are a clever boy, Ivar. Let me take her for a little, Anne. My sweet little baby doll! (*Takes the baby from the* MAID *and dances it up and down.*) Yes, yes, mother will dance with Bob too. What! Have you been snowballing? I wish I had been there too! No, no, I will take their things off, Anne; please let me do it, it is such fun. Go in now, you look half frozen. There is some hot coffee for you on the stove.

(*The* NURSE *goes into the room on the left.* NORA *takes off the children's things and throws them about, while they all talk to her at once.*)

Nora. Really! Did a big dog run after you? But it didn't bite you? No, dogs don't bite nice little dolly

children. You mustn't look at the parcels, Ivar. What are they? Ah, I daresay you would like to know. No, no—it's something nasty! Come, let us have a game! What shall we play at? Hide and Seek? Yes, we'll play Hide and Seek. Bob shall hide first. Must I hide? Very well, I'll hide first. (*She and the children laugh and shout, and romp in and out of the room; at last* NORA *hides under the table, the children rush in and look for her, but do not see her; they hear her smothered laughter, run to the table, lift up the cloth and find her. Shouts of laughter. She crawls forward and pretends to frighten them. Fresh laughter. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the hall door, but none of them has noticed it. The door is half opened, and* KROGSTAD *appears. He waits a little; the game goes on.*)

Krogstad. Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer.

Nora (*with a stifled cry, turns round and gets up on to her knees*). Ah! what do you want?

Krogstad. Excuse me, the outer door was ajar; I suppose someone forgot to shut it.

Nora (*rising*). My husband is out, Mr. Krogstad.

Krogstad. I know that.

Nora. What do you want here, then?

Krogstad. A word with you.

Nora. With me?— (*To the children, gently.*) Go in to nurse. What? No, the strange man won't do mother any harm. When he has gone we will have another game. (*She takes the children into the room on the left, and shuts the door after them.*) You want to speak to me?

Krogstad. Yes, I do.

Nora. To-day? It is not the first of the month yet.

Krogstad. No, it is Christmas Eve, and it will depend on yourself what sort of a Christmas you will spend.

Nora. What do you want? To-day it is absolutely impossible for me—

Krogstad. We won't talk about that till later on. This is something different. I presume you can give me a moment?

Nora. Yes—yes, I can—although—

Krogstad. Good. I was in Olsen's Restaurant and saw your husband going down the street—

Nora. Yes?

Krogstad. With a lady.

Nora. What then?

Krogstad. May I make so bold as to ask if it was a Mrs. Linde?

Nora. It was.

Krogstad. Just arrived in town?

Nora. Yes, to-day.

Krogstad. She is a great friend of yours, isn't she?

Nora. She is. But I don't see—

Krogstad. I knew her too, once upon a time.

Nora. I am aware of that.

Krogstad. Are you? So you know all about it; I thought as much. Then I can ask you, without beating about the bush—is Mrs. Linde to have an appointment in the Bank?

Nora. What right have you to question me, Mr. Krogstad?—You, one of my husband's subordinates! But since you ask, you shall know. Yes, Mrs. Linde *is* to have an appointment. And it was I who pleaded her cause, Mr. Krogstad, let me tell you that.

Krogstad. I was right in what I thought, then.

Nora (*walking up and down the stage*). Sometimes one has a tiny little bit of influence, I should hope. Because one is a woman, it does not necessarily follow that—. When anyone is in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they should really be careful to avoid offending anyone who—who—

Krogstad. Who has influence?

Nora. Exactly.

Krogstad (*changing his tone*). Mrs. Helmer, you will be so good as to use your influence on my behalf.

Nora. What? What do you mean?

Krogstad. You will be so kind as to see that I am allowed to keep my subordinate position in the Bank.

Nora. What do you mean by that? Who proposes to take your post away from you?

Krogstad. Oh, there is no necessity to keep up the

pretence of ignorance. I can quite understand that your friend is not very anxious to expose herself to the chance of rubbing shoulders with me; and I quite understand, too, whom I have to thank for being turned off.

Nora. But I assure you—

Krogstad. Very likely; but, to come to the point, the time has come when I should advise you to use your influence to prevent that.

Nora. But, Mr. Krogstad, I *have* no influence.

Krogstad. Haven't you? I thought you said yourself just now—

Nora. Naturally I did not mean you to put that construction on it. I! What should make you think I have any influence of that kind with my husband?

Krogstad. Oh, I have known your husband from our student days. I don't suppose he is any more unassailable than other husbands.

Nora. If you speak slightingly of my husband, I shall turn you out of the house.

Krogstad. You are bold, Mrs. Helmer.

Nora. I am not afraid of you any longer. As soon as the New Year comes, I shall in a very short time be free of the whole thing.

Krogstad (*controlling himself*). Listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If necessary, I am prepared to fight for my small post in the Bank as if I were fighting for my life.

Nora. So it seems.

Krogstad. It is not only for the sake of the money; indeed, that weighs least with me in the matter. There is another reason—well, I may as well tell you. My position is this. I daresay you know, like everybody else, that once, many years ago, I was guilty of an indiscretion.

Nora. I think I have heard something of the kind.

Krogstad. The matter never came into court; but every way seemed to be closed to me after that. So I took to the business that you know of. I had to do something; and, honestly, I don't think I've been one of the worst. But now I must cut myself free from all that. My sons are growing up; for their sake I

must try and win back as much respect as I can in the town. This post in the Bank was like the first step up for me—and now your husband is going to kick me downstairs again into the mud.

Nora. But you must believe me, Mr. Krogstad; it is not in my power to help you at all.

Krogstad. Then it is because you haven't the will; but I have means to compel you.

Nora. You don't mean that you will tell my husband that I owe you money?

Krogstad. Hm!—suppose I were to tell him?

Nora. It would be perfectly infamous of you. (*Sobbing.*) To think of his learning my secret, which has been my joy and pride, in such an ugly, clumsy way—that he should learn it from you! And it would put me in a horribly disagreeable position—

Krogstad. Only disagreeable?

Nora (*impetuously*). Well, do it, then!—and it will be the worse for you. My husband will see for himself what a blackguard you are, and you certainly won't keep your post then.

Krogstad. I asked you if it was only a disagreeable scene at home that you were afraid of?

Nora. If my husband does get to know of it, of course he will at once pay you what is still owing, and we shall have nothing more to do with you.

Krogstad (*coming a step nearer*). Listen to me, Mrs Helmer. Either you have a very bad memory or you know very little of business. I shall be obliged to remind you of a few details.

Nora. What do you mean?

Krogstad. When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow two hundred and fifty pounds.

Nora. I didn't know any one else to go to.

Krogstad. I promised to get you that amount—

Nora. Yes, and you did so.

Krogstad. I promised to get you that amount, on certain conditions. Your mind was so taken up with your husband's illness, and you were so anxious to get the money for your journey, that you seem to have paid

no attention to the conditions of our bargain. Therefore it will not be amiss if I remind you of them. Now, I promised to get the money on the security of a bond which I drew up.

Nora. Yes, and which I signed.

Krogstad. Good. But below your signature there were a few lines constituting your father a surety for the money; those lines your father should have signed.

Nora. Should? He did sign them.

Krogstad. I had left the date blank; that is to say your father should himself have inserted the date on which he signed the paper. Do you remember that?

Nora. Yes, I think I remember—

Krogstad. Then I gave you the bond to send by post to your father. Is that not so?

Nora. Yes.

Krogstad. And you naturally did so at once, because five or six days afterwards you brought me the bond with your father's signature. And then I gave you the money.

Nora. Well, haven't I been paying it off regularly?

Krogstad. Fairly so, yes. But—to come back to the matter in hand—that must have been a very trying time for you, Mrs. Helmer?

Nora. It was, indeed.

Krogstad. Your father was very ill, wasn't he?

Nora. He was very near his end.

Krogstad. And died soon afterwards?

Nora. Yes.

Krogstad. Tell me, Mrs. Helmer, can you by any chance remember what day your father died?—on what day of the month, I mean.

Nora. Papa died on the 29th of September.

Krogstad. That is correct; I have ascertained it for myself. And, as that is so, there is a discrepancy (*taking a paper from his pocket*) which I cannot account for.

Nora. What discrepancy? I don't know—

Krogstad. The discrepancy consists, Mrs. Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

Nora. What do you mean? I don't understand—

Krogstad. Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father has dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it? (NORA *is silent.*) Can you explain it to me? (NORA *is still silent.*) It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words "2nd of October," as well as the year, are not written in your father's handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and *that* is genuine, I suppose, Mrs. Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

Nora (*after a short pause, throws her head up and looks defiantly at him*). No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa's name.

Krogstad. Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

Nora. In what way? You shall have your money soon.

Krogstad. Let me ask you a question; why did you not send the paper to your father?

Nora. It was impossible; papa was so ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him what the money was to be used for; and when he was so ill himself I couldn't tell him that my husband's life was in danger—it was impossible.

Krogstad. It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

Nora. No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband's life; I couldn't give that up.

Krogstad. But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

Nora. I couldn't take that into account; I didn't trouble myself about you at all. I couldn't bear you, because you put so many heartless difficulties in my way, although you knew what a dangerous condition my husband was in.

Krogstad. Mrs. Helmer, you evidently do not realise clearly what it is that you have been guilty of. But I can assure you that my one false step, which lost me all my reputation, was nothing more or nothing worse than what you have done.

Nora. You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life.

Krogstad. The law cares nothing about motives.

Nora. Then it must be a very foolish law.

Krogstad. Foolish or not, it is the law by which you will be judged, if I produce this paper in court.

Nora. I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save her husband's life? I don't know much about law; but I am certain that there must be laws permitting such things as that. Have you no knowledge of such laws—you who are a lawyer? You must be a very poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

Krogstad. Maybe. But matters of business—such business as you and I have had together—do you think I don't understand that? Very well. Do as you please. But let me tell you this—if I lose my position a second time, you shall lose yours with me. (*He bows, and goes out through the hall*).

Nora (*appears buried in thought for a short time, then tosses her head*). Nonsense! Trying to frighten me like that!—I am not so silly as he thinks. (*Begins to busy herself putting the children's things in order.*) And yet—? No, it's impossible! I did it for love's sake.

The Children (*in the doorway on the left*). Mother, the stranger man has gone out through the gate.

Nora. Yes, dears, I know. But, don't tell anyone about the stranger man. Do you hear? Not even papa.

Children. No, mother; but will you come and play again?

Nora. No no,—not now.

Children. But, mother, you promised us.

Nora. Yes, but I can't now. Run away in; I have such a lot to do. Run away in, my sweet little darlings. (*She gets them into the room by degrees and shuts the door on them; then sits down on the sofa, takes up a piece of needlework and sews a few stitches, but soon stops.*) No! (*Throws down the work, gets up, goes to the hall door and calls out.*) Helen! bring the Tree in. (*Goes to the table on the left, opens a drawer, and stops again.*) No, no! it is quite impossible!

Maid (*coming in with the Tree*). Where shall I put it, ma'am?

Nora. Here, in the middle of the floor.

Maid. Shall I get you anything else?

Nora. No, thank you. I have all I want.

[*Exit* MAID.

Nora (*begins dressing the tree*). A candle here—and flowers here—. The horrible man! It's all nonsense—there's nothing wrong. The Tree shall be splendid! I will do everything I can think of to please you, Torvald!—I will sing for you, dance for you—(HELMER *comes in with some papers under his arm.*) Oh! are you back already.

Helmer. Yes. Has anyone been here?

Nora. Here? No.

Helmer. That is strange. I saw Krogstad going out of the gate.

Nora. Did you? Oh yes, I forgot, Krogstad was here for a moment.

Helmer. Nora, I can see from your manner that he has been here begging you to say a good word for him.

Nora. Yes.

Helmer. And you were to appear to do it of your own accord; you were to conceal from me the fact of his having been here; didn't he beg that of you too?

Nora. Yes, Torvald, but—

Helmer. Nora, Nora, and you would be a party to that sort of thing? To have any talk with a man like that, and give him any sort of promise? And to tell me a lie into the bargain?

Nora. A lie—?

Helmer. Didn't you tell me no one had been here?

(*Shakes his finger at her.*) My little song-bird must never do that again. A song-bird must have a clean beak to chirp with—no false notes! (*Puts his arm round her waist.*) That is so, isn't it? Yes, I am sure it is. (*Lets her go.*) We will say no more about it. (*Sits down by the stove.*) How warm and snug it is here! (*Turns over his papers.*)

Nora. (*after a short pause, during which she busies herself with the Christmas Tree.*) Torvald!

Helmer. Yes.

Nora. I am looking forward tremendously to the fancy dress ball at the Stenborgs' the day after to-morrow.

Helmer. And I am tremendously curious to see what you are going to surprise me with.

Nora. It was very silly of me to want to do that.

Helmer. What do you mean?

Nora. I can't hit upon anything that will do; everything I think of seems so silly and insignificant.

Helmer. Does my little Nora acknowledge that at last?

Nora (*standing behind his chair with her arms on the back of it*). Are you very busy, Torvald?

Helmer. Well—

Nora. What are all those papers?

Helmer. Bank business.

Nora. Already?

Helmer. I have got authority from the retiring manager to undertake the necessary changes in the staff and in the rearrangement of the work; and I must make use of the Christmas week for that, so as to have everything in order for the new year.

Nora. Then that was why this poor Krogstad—

Helmer. Hm!

Nora (*leans against the back of his chair and strokes his hair*). If you hadn't been so busy I should have asked you a tremendously big favour, Torvald.

Helmer. What is that? Tell me.

Nora. There is no one has such good taste as you. And I do so want to look nice at the fancy-dress ball.

Torvald, couldn't you take me in hand and decide what I shall go as, and what sort of a dress I shall wear?

Helmer. Aha! so my obstinate little woman is obliged to get someone to come to her rescue?

Nora. Yes, Torvald, I can't get along a bit without your help.

Helmer. Very well, I will think it over, we shall manage to hit upon something.

Nora. That *is* nice of you. (*Goes to the Christmas Tree. A short pause.*) How pretty the red flowers look—. But, tell me, was it really something very bad that this Krogstad was guilty of?

Helmer. He forged someone's name. Have you any dea what that means?

Nora. Isn't it possible that he was driven to do it by necessity?

Helmer. Yes; or, as in so many cases, by imprudence. I am not so heartless as to condemn a man altogether because of a single false step of that kind.

Nora. No you wouldn't, would you, Torvald?

Helmer. Many a man has been able to retrieve his character, if he has openly confessed his fault and taken his punishment.

Nora. Punishment—?

Helmer. But Krogstad did nothing of that sort; he got himself out of it by a cunning trick, and that is why he has gone under altogether.

Nora. But do you think it would—?

Helmer. Just think how a guilty man like that has to lie and play the hypocrite with everyone, how he has to wear a mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and children. And about the children—that is the most terrible part of it all, Nora.

Nora. How?

Helmer. Because such an atmosphere of lies infects and poisons the whole life of a home. Each breath the children take in such a house is full of the germs of evil.

Nora (*coming nearer him*). Are you sure of that?

Helmer. My dear, I have often seen it in the course

of my life as a lawyer. Almost everyone who has gone to the bad early in life has had a deceitful mother.

Nora. Why do you only say—mother?

Helmer. It seems most commonly to be the mother's influence, though naturally a bad father's would have the same result. Every lawyer is familiar with the fact. This Krogstad, now, has been persistently poisoning his own children with lies and dissimulation; that is why I say he has lost all moral character. (*Holds out his hands to her.*) That is why my sweet little Nora must promise me not to plead his cause. Give me your hand on it. Come, come, what is this? Give me your hand. There now, that's settled. I assure you it would be quite impossible for me to work with him; I literally feel physically ill when I am in the company of such people.

Nora (*takes her hand out of his and goes to the opposite side of the Christmas Tree*). How hot it is in here; and I have such a lot to do.

Helmer (*getting up and putting his papers in order*). Yes, and I must try and read through some of these before dinner; and I must think about your costume, too. And it is just possible I may have something ready in gold paper to hang up on the Tree. (*Puts his hand on her head.*) My precious little singing-bird! (*He goes into his room and shuts the door after him.*)

Nora (*after a pause, whispers*). No, no—it isn't true. It's impossible; it must be impossible.

(*The* NURSE *opens the door on the left.*)

Nurse. The little ones are begging so hard to be allowed to come in to mamma.

Nora. No, no, no! Don't let them come in to me! You stay with them, Anne.

Nurse. Very well, ma'am. (*Shuts the door.*)

Nora (*pale with terror*). Deprave my little children? Poison my home? (*A short pause. Then she tosses her head.*) It's not true. It can't possibly be true.

ACT II.

(THE SAME SCENE.—*The Christmas Tree is in the corner by the piano, stripped of its ornaments and with burnt-down candle-ends on its dishevelled branches.* NORA'S *cloak and hat are lying on the sofa. She is alone in the room, walking about uneasily. She stops by the sofa and takes up her cloak.*)

Nora (*drops the cloak*). Someone is coming now! (*Goes to the door and listens.*) No—it is no one. Of course, no one will come to-day, Christmas Day—nor to-morrow either. But, perhaps—(*opens the door and looks out*). No, nothing in the letter-box; it is quite empty. (*Comes forward.*) What rubbish! of course he can't be in earnest about it. Such a thing couldn't happen; it is impossible—I have three little children.

(*Enter the* NURSE *from the room on the left, carrying a big cardboard box.*)

Nurse. At last I have found the box with the fancy dress.

Nora. Thanks; put it on the table.

Nurse (*doing so*). But it is very much in want of mending.

Nora. I should like to tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.

Nurse. What an idea! It can easily be put in order—just a little patience.

Nora. Yes, I will go and get Mrs. Linde to come and help me with it.

Nurse. What, out again? In this horrible weather? You will catch cold, ma'am, and make yourself ill.

Nora. Well, worse than that might happen. How are the children?

Nurse. The poor little souls are playing with their Christmas presents, but—

Nora. Do they ask much for me?

Nurse. You see, they are so accustomed to have their mamma with them.

Nora. Yes but, nurse, I shall not be able to be so much with them now as I was before.

Nurse. Oh well, young children easily get accustomed to anything.

Nora. Do you think so? Do you think they would forget their mother if she went away altogether?

Nurse. Good heavens!—went away altogether?

Nora. Nurse, I want you to tell me something I have often wondered about—how could you have the heart to put your own child out among strangers?

Nurse. I was obliged to, if I wanted to be little Nora's nurse.

Nora. Yes, but how could you be willing to do it?

Nurse. What, when I was going to get such a good place by it? A poor girl who has got into trouble should be glad to. Besides, that wicked man didn't do a single thing for me.

Nora. But I suppose your daughter has quite forgotten you.

Nurse. No, indeed she hasn't. She wrote to me when she was confirmed, and when she was married.

Nora (*putting her arms round her neck*). Dear old Anne, you were a good mother to me when I was little.

Nurse. Little Nora, poor dear, had no other mother but me.

Nora. And if my little ones had no other mother, I am sure you would— What nonsense I am talking! (*Opens the box.*) Go in to them. Now I must—. You will see to-morrow how charming I shall look.

Nurse. I am sure there will be no one at the ball so charming as you, ma'am. (*Goes into the room on the left.*)

Nora (*begins to unpack the box, but soon pushes it away from her*). If only I dared go out. If only no one would come. If only I could be sure nothing would happen here in the meantime. Stuff and nonsense! No one will come. Only I mustn't think about it. I will brush my muff. What lovely, lovely gloves! Out of my thoughts, out of my thoughts! One, two, three, four, five, six— (*Screams.*) Ah! there is someone

coming—. (*Makes a movement towards the door, but stands irresolute.*)

(*Enter* MRS. LINDE *from the hall, where she has taken off her cloak and hat.*)

Nora. Oh, it's you, Christine. There is no one else out there, is there? How good of you to come!

Mrs. Linde. I heard you were up asking for me.

Nora. Yes, I was passing by. As a matter of fact, it is something you could help me with. Let us sit down here on the sofa. Look here. To-morrow evening there is to be a fancy-dress ball at the Stenborgs', who live above us; and Torvald wants me to go as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the Tarantella that I learnt at Capri.

Mrs. Linde. I see; you are going to keep up the character.

Nora. Yes, Torvald wants me to. Look, here is the dress; Torvald had it made for me there, but now it is all so torn, and I haven't any idea—

Mrs. Linde. We will easily put that right. It is only some of the trimming come unsewn here and there. Needle and thread? Now then, that's all we want.

Nora. It *is* nice of you.

Mrs. Linde (*sewing*). So you are going to be dressed up to-morrow, Nora. I will tell you what — I shall come in for a moment and see you in your fine feathers. But I have completely forgotten to thank you for a delightful evening yesterday.

Nora (*gets up, and crosses the stage*). Well I don't think yesterday was as pleasant as usual. You ought to have come to town a little earlier, Christine. Certainly Torvald does understand how to make a house dainty and attractive.

Mrs. Linde. And so do you, it seems to me; you are not your father's daughter for nothing. But tell me, is Doctor Rank always as depressed as he was yesterday?

Nora. No; yesterday it was very noticeable. I must tell you that he suffers from a very dangerous disease. He has consumption of the spine, poor creature. His father was a horrible man who committed all sorts of

excesses; and that is why his son was sickly from childhood, do you understand?

Mrs. Linde (*dropping her sewing*). But, my dearest Nora, how do you know anything about such things?

Nora (*walking about*). Pooh! When you have three children, you get visits now and then from—from married women, who know something of medical matters, and they talk about one thing and another.

Mrs. Linde (*goes on sewing. A short silence*). Does Doctor Rank come here every day?

Nora. Every day regularly. He is Torvald's most intimate friend, and a great friend of mine too. He is just like one of the family.

Mrs. Linde. But tell me this—is he perfectly sincere? I mean, isn't he the kind of man that is very anxious to make himself agreeable?

Nora. Not in the least. What makes you think that?

Mrs. Linde. When you introduced him to me yesterday, he declared he had often heard my name mentioned in this house; but afterwards I noticed that your husband hadn't the slightest idea who I was. So how could Doctor Rank—?

Nora. That is quite right, Christine. Torvald is so absurdly fond of me that he wants me absolutely to himself, as he says. At first he used to seem almost jealous if I mentioned any of the dear folk at home, so naturally I gave up doing so. But I often talk about such things with Doctor Rank, because he likes hearing about them.

Mrs. Linde. Listen to me, Nora. You are still very like a child in many things, and I am older than you in many ways and have a little more experience. Let me tell you this—you ought to make an end of it with Doctor Rank.

Nora. What ought I to make an end of?

Mrs. Linde. Of two things, I think. Yesterday you talked some nonsense about a rich admirer who was to leave you money—

Nora. An admirer who doesn't exist, unfortunately! But what then?

Mrs. Linde. Is Doctor Rank a man of means?

Nora. Yes, he is.

Mrs. Linde. And has no one to provide for?

Nora. No, no one; but—

Mrs. Linde. And comes here every day?

Nora. Yes, I told you so.

Mrs. Linde. But how can this well-bred man be so tactless?

Nora. I don't understand you at all.

Mrs. Linde. Don't prevaricate, Nora. Do you suppose I don't guess who lent you the two hundred and fifty pounds?

Nora. Are you out of your senses? How can you think of such a thing! A friend of ours, who comes here every day! Do you realise what a horribly painful position that would be?

Mrs. Linde. Then it really isn't he?

Nora. No, certainly not. It would never have entered into my head for a moment. Besides, he had no money to lend then; he came into his money afterwards.

Mrs. Linde. Well, I think that was lucky for you, my dear Nora.

Nora. No, it would never have come into my head to ask Doctor Rank. Although I am quite sure that if I had asked him—

Mrs. Linde. But of course you won't.

Nora. Of course not. I have no reason to think it could possibly be necessary. But I am quite sure that if I told Doctor Rank—

Mrs. Linde. Behind your husband's back?

Nora. I must make an end of it with the other one, and that will be behind his back too. I *must* make an end of it with him.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, that is what I told you yesterday, but—

Nora (*walking up and down*). A man can put a thing like that straight much easier than a woman—

Mrs. Linde. One's husband, yes.

Nora. Nonsense! (*Standing still.*) When you pay off a debt you get your bond back, don't you?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, as a matter of course.

Nora. And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces, and burn it up—the nasty dirty paper!

Mrs. Linde (*looks hard at her, lays down her sewing and gets up slowly*). Nora, you are concealing something from me.

Nora. Do I look as if I were?

Mrs. Linde. Something has happened to you since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?

Nora (*going nearer to her*). Christine! (*Listens.*) Hush! there's Torvald come home. Do you mind going in to the children for the present? Torvald can't bear to see dressmaking going on. Let Anne help you.

Mrs. Linde (*gathering some of the things together*). Certainly—but I am not going away from here till we have had it out with one another. (*She goes into the room on the left, as Helmer comes in from the hall.*)

Nora (*going up to* HELMER). I have wanted you so much, Torvald dear.

Helmer. Was that the dressmaker?

Nora. No, it was Christine; she is helping me to put my dress in order. You will see I shall look quite smart.

Helmer. Wasn't that a happy thought of mine, now?

Nora. Splendid! But don't you think it is nice of me, too, to do as you wish?

Helmer. Nice?—because you do as your husband wishes? Well, well, you little rogue, I am sure you did not mean it in that way. But I am not going to disturb you; you will want to be trying on your dress, I expect.

Nora. I suppose you are going to work.

Helmer. Yes. (*Shows her a bundle of papers.*) Look at that. I have just been into the bank. (*Turns to go into his room.*)

Nora. Torvald.

Helmer. Yes.

Nora. If your little squirrel were to ask you for something very, very prettily—?

Helmer. What then?

Nora. Would you do it?

Helmer. I should like to hear what it is, first.

Nora. Your squirrel would run about and do all her tricks if you would be nice, and do what she wants.

Helmer. Speak plainly.

Nora. Your skylark would chirp about in every room, with her song rising and falling—

Helmer. Well, my skylark does that anyhow.

Nora. I would play the fairy and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.

Helmer. Nora—you surely don't mean that request you made of me this morning?

Nora (*going near him*). Yes, Torvald, I beg you so earnestly—

Helmer. Have you really the courage to open up that question again?

Nora. Yes, dear, you *must* do as I ask; you *must* let Krogstad keep his post in the bank.

Helmer. My dear Nora, it is his post that I have arranged Mrs. Linde shall have.

Nora. Yes, you have been awfully kind about that, but you could just as well dismiss some other clerk instead of Krogstad.

Helmer. This is simply incredible obstinacy! Because you chose to give him a thoughtless promise that you would speak for him, I am expected to—

Nora. That isn't the reason, Torvald. It is for your own sake. This fellow writes in the most scurrilous newspapers; you have told me so yourself. He can do you an unspeakable amount of harm. I am frightened to death of him—

Helmer. Ah, I understand; it is recollections of the past that scare you.

Nora. What do you mean?

Helmer. Naturally you are thinking of your father.

Nora. Yes—yes, of course. Just recall to your mind what these malicious creatures wrote in the papers about papa, and how horribly they slandered him. I believe they would have procured his dismissal if the Department had not sent you over to inquire into it, and if you had not been so kindly disposed and helpful to him.

Helmer. My little Nora, there is an important difference between your father and me. Your father's reputation as a public official was not above suspicion. Mine is, and I hope it will continue to be so, as long as I hold my office.

Nora. You never can tell what mischief these men may contrive. We ought to be so well off, so snug and happy here in our peaceful home, and have no cares—you and I and the children, Torvald! That is why I beg you so earnestly—

Helmer. And it is just by interceding for him that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It is already known at the Bank that I mean to dismiss Krogstad. Is it to get about now that the new manager has changed his mind at his wife's bidding—

Nora. And what if it did?

Helmer. Of course!—if only this obstinate little person can get her way! Do you suppose I am going to make myself ridiculous before my whole staff, to let people think that I am a man to be swayed by all sorts of outside influence? I should very soon feel the consequences of it, I can tell you! And besides, there is one thing that makes it quite impossible for me to have Krogstad in the bank as long as I am manager.

Nora. Whatever is that?

Helmer. His moral failings I might perhaps have overlooked, if necessary—

Nora. Yes, you could—couldn't you?

Helmer. And I hear he is a good worker, too. But I knew him when we were boys. It was one of those rash friendships that so often prove an incubus in after life. I may as well tell you plainly, we were once on very intimate terms with one another. But this tactless fellow lays no restraint on himself when other people are present. On the contrary, he thinks it gives him the right to adopt a familiar tone with me, and every minute it is "I say, Helmer, old fellow!" and that sort of thing. I assure you it is extremely painful for me. He would make my position in the bank intolerable.

Nora. Torvald, I don't believe you mean that.

Helmer. Don't you? Why not?

Nora. Because it is such a narrow-minded way of looking at things.

Helmer. What are you saying? Narrow-minded? Do you think I am narrow-minded?

Nora. No, just the opposite, dear—and it is exactly for that reason.

Helmer. It's the same thing. You say my point of view is narrow-minded, so I must be so too. Narrow-minded! Very well—I must put an end to this. (*Goes to the hall-door and calls.*) Helen!

Nora. What are you going to do?

Helmer (*looking among his papers.*) Settle it. (*Enter* MAID). Look here; take this letter and go downstairs with it at once. Find a messenger and tell him to deliver it, and be quick. The address is on it, and here is the money.

Maid. Very well, sir. (*Exit with the letter.*)

Helmer (*putting his papers together*). Now then, little Miss Obstinate.

Nora (*breathlessly*). Torvald—what was that letter?

Helmer. Krogstad's dismissal.

Nora. Call her back, Torvald! There is still time. Oh Torvald, call her back! Do it for my sake—for your own sake—for the children's sake! Do you hear me, Torvald? Call her back! You don't know what that letter can bring upon us.

Helmer. It's too late.

Nora. Yes, it's too late.

Helmer. My dear Nora, I can forgive the anxiety you are in, although really it is an insult to me. It is, indeed. Isn't it an insult to think that I should be afraid of a starving quill-driver's vengeance? But I forgive you nevertheless, because it is such eloquent witness to your great love for me. (*Takes her in his arms.*) And that is as it should be, my own darling Nora. Come what will, you may be sure I shall have both courage and strength if they be needed. You will see I am man enough to take everything upon myself.

Nora (*in a horror-stricken voice*). What do you mean by that?

Helmer. Everything, I say—

Nora (*recovering herself*). You will never have to do that.

Helmer. That's right. Well, we will share it, Nora, as man and wife should. That is how it shall be. (*Caressing her.*) Are you content now? There! there! —not these frightened dove's eyes! The whole thing is only the wildest fancy!—Now, you must go and play through the Tarantella and practise with your tambourine. I shall go into the inner office and shut the door, and I shall hear nothing; you can make as much noise as you please. (*Turns back at the door.*) And when Rank comes, tell him where he will find me. (*Nods to her, takes his papers and goes into his room, and shuts the door after him.*)

Nora (*bewildered with anxiety, stands as if rooted to the spot, and whispers*). He was capable of doing it. He will do it. He will do it in spite of everything.—No, not that! Never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some help, some way out of it! (*The door-bell rings.*) Doctor Rank! Anything rather than that—anything, whatever it is! (*She puts her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it.* RANK *is standing without, hanging up his coat. During the following dialogue it begins to grow dark.*)

Nora. Good-day, Doctor Rank. I knew your ring. But you mustn't go into Torvald now; I think he is busy with something.

Rank. And you?

Nora (*brings him in and shuts the door after him*). Oh, you know very well I always have time for you.

Rank. Thank you. I shall make use of as much of it as I can.

Nora. What do you mean by that? As much of it as you can?

Rank. Well, does that alarm you?

Nora. It was such a strange way of putting it. Is anything likely to happen?

Rank. Nothing but what I have long been prepared for. But I certainly didn't expect it to happen so soon.

Nora (*gripping him by the arm*). What have you found out? Doctor Rank, you must tell me.

Rank (*sitting down by the stove*). It is all up with me. And it can't be helped.

Nora (*with a sigh of relief*). Is it about yourself?

Rank. Who else? It is no use lying to one's self. I am the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. Lately I have been taking stock of my internal economy. Bankrupt! Probably within a month I shall lie rotting in the churchyard.

Nora. What an ugly thing to say!

Rank. The thing itself is cursedly ugly, and the worst of it is that I shall have to face so much more that is ugly before that. I shall only make one more examination of myself; when I have done that, I shall know pretty certainly when it will be that the horrors of dissolution will begin. There is something I want to tell you. Helmer's refined nature gives him an unconquerable disgust at everything that is ugly; I won't have him in my sick-room.

Nora. Oh, but, Doctor Rank—

Rank. I won't have him there. Not on any account. I bar my door to him. As soon as I am quite certain that the worst has come, I shall send you my card with a black cross on it, and then you will know that the loathsome end has begun.

Nora. You are quite absurd to-day. And I wanted you so much to be in a really good humour.

Rank. With death stalking beside me?—To have to pay this penalty for another man's sin! Is there any justice in that? And in every single family, in one way or another, some such inexorable retribution is being exacted—

Nora (*putting her hands over her ears*). Rubbish! Do talk of something cheerful.

Rank. Oh, it's a mere laughing matter, the whole thing. My poor innocent spine has to suffer for my father's youthful amusements.

Nora (*sitting at the table on the left.*) I suppose you mean that he was too partial to asparagus and pâté de foie gras, don't you.

Rank. Yes, and to truffles.

Nora. Truffles, yes. And oysters too, I suppose?

Rank. Oysters, of course, that goes without saying.

Nora. And heaps of port and champagne. It is sad that all these nice things should take their revenge on our bones.

Rank. Especially that they should revenge themselves on the unlucky bones of those who have not had the satisfaction of enjoying them.

Nora. Yes, that's the saddest part of it all.

Rank (*with a searching look at her*). Hm!—

Nora (*after a short pause*). Why did you smile?

Rank. No, it was you that laughed.

Nora. No, it was you that smiled, Doctor Rank!

Rank (*rising*). You are a greater rascal than I thought.

Nora. I am in a silly mood to-day.

Rank. So it seems.

Nora (*putting her hands on his shoulders*). Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death mustn't take you away from Torvald and me.

Rank It is a loss you would easily recover from. Those who are gone are soon forgotten.

Nora (*looking at him anxiously*). Do you believe that?

Rank. People form new ties, and then—

Nora. Who will form new ties?

Rank. Both you and Helmer, when I am gone. You yourself are already on the high road to it, I think. What did that Mrs. Linde want here last night?

Nora. Oho!—you don't mean to say you are jealous of poor Christine?

Rank. Yes, I am. She will be my successor in this house. When I am done for, this woman will—

Nora. Hush! don't speak so loud. She is in that room.

Rank. To-day again. There, you see.

Nora. She has only come to sew my dress for me. Bless my soul, how unreasonable you are! (*Sits down on the sofa.*) Be nice now, Doctor Rank, and to-morrow you will see how beautifully I shall dance, and you can imagine I am doing it all for you—and for Torvald too, of course. (*Takes various things out of the box.*) Doctor Rank, come and sit down here, and I will show you something.

Rank (*sitting down*). What is it?

Nora. Just look at those!

Rank. Silk stockings.

Nora. Flesh-coloured. Aren't they lovely? It is so dark here now, but to-morrow—. No, no, no! you must only look at the feet. Oh well, you may have leave to look at the legs too.

Rank. Hm!—

Nora. Why are you looking so critical? Don't you think they will fit me?

Rank. I have no means of forming an opinion about that.

Nora (*looks at him for a moment*). For shame! (*Hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings.*) That's to punish you. (*Folds them up again.*)

Rank. And what other nice things am I to be allowed to see?

Nora. Not a single thing more, for being so naughty. (*She looks among the things, humming to herself.*)

Rank (*after a short silence*). When I am sitting here, talking to you as intimately as this, I cannot imagine for a moment what would have become of me if I had never come into this house.

Nora (*smiling*). I believe you do feel thoroughly at home with us.

Rank (*in a lower voice, looking straight in front of him*). And to be obliged to leave it all—

Nora. Nonsense, you are not going to leave it.

Rank (*as before*). And not be able to leave behind one the slightest token of one's gratitude, scarcely even a fleeting regret—nothing but an empty place which the first comer can fill as well as any other.

Nora. And if I asked you now for a—? No!

Rank. For what?

Nora. For a big proof of your friendship—

Rank. Yes, yes!

Nora. I mean a tremendously big favour—

Rank. Would you really make me so happy for once?

Nora. Ah, but you don't know what it is yet.

Rank. No—but tell me.

Nora. I really can't, Doctor Rank. It is something out of all reason; it means advice, and help, and a favour—

Rank. The bigger a thing it is the better. I can't conceive what it is you mean. Do tell me. Haven't I your confidence?

Nora. More than anyone else. I know you are my truest and best friend, and so I will tell you what it is. Well, Doctor Rank, it is something you must help me to prevent. You know how devotedly, how inexpressibly deeply Torvald loves me; he would never for a moment hesitate to give his life for me.

Rank (*leaning towards her*). Nora—do you think he is the only one—?

Nora (*with a slight start*). The only one—?

Rank. The only one who would gladly give his life for your sake.

Nora (*sadly*). Is that it?

Rank. I was determined you should know it before I went away, and there will never be a better opportunity than this. Now you know it, Nora. And now you know, too, that you can trust me as you would trust no one else.

Nora (*rises, deliberately and quietly*). Let me pass.

Rank (*makes room for her to pass him, but sits still*). Nora!

Nora (*at the hall door*). Helen, bring in the lamp. (*Goes over to the stove.*) Dear Doctor Rank, that was really horrid of you.

Rank. To have loved you as much as anyone else does? Was that horrid?

Nora. No, but to go and tell me so. There was really no need—

Rank. What do you mean? Did you know—? (MAID *enters with lamp, puts it down on the table, and goes out.*) Nora — Mrs. Helmer — tell me, had you any idea of this?

Nora. Oh, how do I know whether I had or whether I hadn't? I really can't tell you— To think you could be so clumsy, Doctor Rank! We were getting on so nicely.

Rank. Well, at all events you know now that you can command me, body and soul. So won't you speak out?

Nora (*looking at him*). After what happened?

Rank. I beg you to let me know what it is.

Nora. I can't tell you anything now.

Rank. Yes, yes. You mustn't punish me in that way. Let me have permission to do for you whatever a man may do.

Nora. You can do nothing for me now. Besides, I really don't need any help at all. You will find that the whole thing is merely fancy on my part. It really is so—of course it is! (*Sits down in the rocking-chair, and looks at him with a smile.*) You are a nice sort of man, Doctor Rank!—don't you feel ashamed of yourself, now the lamp has come?

Rank. Not a bit. But perhaps I had better go—for ever?

Nora. No, indeed, you shall not. Of course you must come here just as before. You know very well Torvald can't do without you.

Rank. Yes, but you?

Nora. Oh, I am always tremendously pleased when you come.

Rank. It is just that, that put me on the wrong track. You are a riddle to me. I have often thought that you would almost as soon be in my company as in Helmer's.

Nora. Yes—you see there are some people one loves best, and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions.

Rank. Yes, there is something in that.

Nora. When I was at home, of course I loved papa best. But I always thought it tremendous fun if I could

steal down into the maids' room, because they never moralised at all, and talked to each other about such entertaining things.

Rank. I see—it is *their* place I have taken.

Nora (*jumping up and going to him*). Oh, dear, nice Doctor Rank, I never meant that at all. But surely you can understand that being with Torvald is a little like being with papa—

(*Enter* MAID *from the hall.*)

Maid. If you please, ma'am. (*Whispers and hands her a card.*)

Nora (*glancing at the card*). Oh! (*Puts it in her pocket.*)

Rank. Is there anything wrong?

Nora. No, no, not in the least. It is only something—it is my new dress—

Rank. What? Your dress is lying there.

Nora. Oh, yes, that one; but this is another. I ordered it. Torvald mustn't know about it—

Rank. Oho! Then that was the great secret.

Nora. Of course. Just go in to him; he is sitting in the inner room. Keep him as long as—

Rank. Make your mind easy; I won't let him escape. (*Goes into* HELMER'S *room.*)

Nora (*to the* MAID). And he is standing waiting in the kitchen?

Maid. Yes; he came up the back stairs.

Nora. But didn't you tell him no one was in?

Maid. Yes, but it was no good.

Nora. He won't go away?

Maid. No; he says he won't until he has seen you, ma'am.

Nora. Well, let him come in—but quietly. Helen, you mustn't say anything about it to anyone. It is a surprise for my husband.

Maid. Yes, ma'am, I quite understand. (*Exit.*)

Nora. This dreadful thing is going to happen! It will happen in spite of me! No, no, no, it can't happen—it shan't happen! (*She bolts the door of* HELMER'S *room. The* MAID *opens the hall door for* KROGSTAD *and shuts it*

after him. He is wearing a fur coat, high boots and a fur cap.)

Nora (*advancing towards him*). Speak low—my husband is at home.

Krogstad. No matter about that.

Nora. What do you want of me?

Krogstad. An explanation of something.

Nora. Make haste then. What is it?

Krogstad. You know, I suppose, that I have got my dismissal.

Nora. I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought as hard as I could on your side, but it was no good.

Krogstad. Does your husband love you so little, then? He knows what I can expose you to, and yet he ventures—

Nora. How can you suppose that he has any knowledge of the sort?

Krogstad. I didn't suppose so at all. It would not be the least like our dear Torvald Helmer to show so much courage—

Nora. Mr. Krogstad, a little respect for my husband, please.

Krogstad. Certainly—all the respect he deserves. But since you have kept the matter so carefully to yourself, I make bold to suppose that you have a little clearer idea, than you had yesterday, of what it actually is that you have done?

Nora. More than you could ever teach me.

Krogstad. Yes, such a bad lawyer as I am.

Nora. What is it you want of me?

Krogstad. Only to see how you were, Mrs. Helmer I have been thinking about you all day long. A mere cashier, a quill-driver, a—well, a man like me—even he has a little of what is called feeling, you know.

Nora. Show it, then; think of my little children.

Krogstad. Have you and your husband thought of mine? But never mind about that. I only wanted to tell you that you need not take this matter too seriously. In the first place there will be no accusation made on my part.

Nora. No, of course not; I was sure of that.

Krogstad. The whole thing can be arranged amicably; there is no reason why anyone should know anything about it. It will remain a secret between us three.

Nora. My husband must never get to know anything about it.

Krogstad. How will you be able to prevent it? Am I to understand that you can pay the balance that is owing?

Nora. No, not just at present.

Krogstad. Or perhaps that you have some expedient for raising the money soon?

Nora. No expedient that I mean to make use of.

Krogstad. Well, in any case, it would have been of no use to you now. If you stood there with ever so much money in your hand, I would never part with your bond.

Nora. Tell me what purpose you mean to put it to.

Krogstad. I shall only preserve it—keep it in my possession. No one who is not concerned in the matter shall have the slightest hint of it. So that if the thought of it has driven you to any desperate resolution—

Nora. It has.

Krogstad. If you had it in your mind to run away from your home.—

Nora. I had.

Krogstad. Or even something worse—

Nora. How could you know that?

Krogstad. Give up the idea.

Nora. How did you know I had thought of *that?*

Krogstad. Most of us think of that at first. I did, too—but I hadn't the courage.

Nora (*faintly*). No more had I.

Krogstad (*in a tone of relief*). No, that's it, isn't it—you hadn't the courage either?

Nora. No, I haven't—I haven't.

Krogstad. Besides, it would have been a great piece of folly. Once the first storm at home is over—. I have a letter for your husband in my pocket.

Nora. Telling him everything?

Krogstad. In as lenient a manner as I possibly could.

Nora (*quickly*). He mustn't get the letter. Tear it up. I will find some means of getting money.

Krogstad. Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer, but I think I told you just now—

Nora. I am not speaking of what I owe you. Tell me what sum you are asking my husband for, and I will get the money.

Krogstad. I am not asking your husband for a penny.

Nora. What do you want, then?

Krogstad. I will tell you. I want to rehabilitate myself, Mrs. Helmer; I want to get on; and in that your husband must help me. For the last year and a half I have not had a hand in anything dishonourable, and all that time I have been struggling in most restricted circumstances. I was content to work my way up step by step. Now I am turned out, and I am not going to be satisfied with merely being taken into favour again. I want to get on, I tell you. I want to get into the Bank again, in a higher position. Your husband must make a place for me—

Nora. That he will never do!

Krogstad. He will; I know him; he dare not protest. And as soon as I am in there again with him, then you will see! Within a year I shall be the manager's right hand. It will be Nils Krogstad and not Torvald Helmer who manages the Bank.

Nora. That's a thing you will never see!

Krogstad. Do you mean that you will—?

Nora. I have courage enough for it now.

Krogstad. Oh, you can't frighten me. A fine, spoilt lady like you—

Nora. You will see, you will see.

Krogstad. Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, coal-black water? And then, in the spring, to float up to the surface, all horrible and unrecognisable, with your hair fallen out—

Nora. You can't frighten me.

Krogstad. Nor you me. People don't do such things,

Mrs. Helmer. Besides, what use would it be? I should have him completely in my power all the same

Nora. Afterwards? When I am no longer—

Krogstad. Have you forgotten that it is I who have the keeping of your reputation? (*Nora stands speechlessly looking at him.*) Well, now, I have warned you. Do not do anything foolish. When Helmer has had my letter, I shall expect a message from him. And be sure you remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me into such ways as this again. I will never forgive him for that. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer. (*Exit through the hall.*)

Nora (*goes to the hall door, opens it slightly and listens.*) He is going. He is not putting the letter in the box. Oh no, no! that's impossible! (*Opens the door by degrees.*) What is that? He is standing outside. He is not going downstairs. Is he hesitating? Can he—? (*A letter drops into the box; then* KROGSTAD'S *footsteps are heard, till they die away as he goes downstairs.* NORA *utters a stifled cry, and runs across the room to the table by the sofa. A short pause.*)

Nora. In the letter-box. (*Steals across to the hall-door.*) There it lies—Torvald, Torvald, there is no hope for us now!

(Mrs LINDE *comes in from the room on the left, carrying the dress.*)

Mrs. Linde. There, I can't see anything more to mend now. Would you like to try it on—?

Nora (*in a hoarse whisper*). Christine, come here.

Mrs. Linde (*throwing the dress down on the sofa*). What is the matter with you? You look so agitated!

Nora. Come here. Do you see that letter? There, look—you can see it through the glass in the letter-box.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I see it.

Nora. That letter is from Krogstad.

Mrs. Linde. Nora—it was Krogstad who lent you the money!

Nora. Yes, and now Torvald will know all about it.

Mrs. Linde. Believe me, Nora, that's the best thing for both of you.

Nora. You don't know all. I forged a name.

Mrs. Linde. Good heavens—!

Nora. I only want to say this to you, Christine—you must be my witness.

Mrs. Linde. Your witness? What do you mean? What am I to—?

Nora. If I should go out of my mind—and it might easily happen—

Mrs. Linde. Nora!

Nora. Or if anything else should happen to me—anything, for instance, that might prevent my being here—

Mrs. Linde. Nora! Nora! you are quite out of your mind.

Nora. And if it should happen that there were someone who wanted to take all the responsibility, all the blame, you understand—

Mrs. Linde. Yes, yes—but how can you suppose—?

Nora. Then you must be my witness, that it is not true, Christine. I am not out of my mind at all; I am in my right senses now, and I tell you no one else has known anything about it; I, and I alone, did the whole thing. Remember that.

Mrs. Linde. I will, indeed. But I don't understand all this.

Nora. How should you understand it? A wonderful thing is going to happen?

Mrs. Linde. A wonderful thing?

Nora. Yes, a wonderful thing!—But it is so terrible, Christine; it *mustn't* happen, not for all the world.

Mrs. Linde. I will go at once and see Krogstad.

Nora. Don't go to him; he will do you some harm.

Mrs. Linde. There was a time when he would gladly do anything for my sake.

Nora. He?

Mrs. Linde. Where does he live?

Nora. How should I know—? Yes (*feeling in her pocket*) here is his card. But the letter, the letter—!

Helmer (*calls from his room, knocking at the door*). Nora!

Nora (*cries out anxiously*). Oh, what's that? What do you want?

Helmer. Don't be so frightened. We are not coming in: you have locked the door. Are you trying on your dress?

Nora. Yes, that's it. I look so nice, Torvald.

Mrs. Linde (*who has read the card*). I see he lives at the corner here.

Nora. Yes, but it's no use. It is hopeless. The letter is lying there in the box.

Mrs. Linde. And your husband keeps the key?

Nora. Yes, always.

Mrs. Linde. Krogstad must ask for his letter back unread, he must find some pretence—

Nora. But it is just at this time that Torvald generally—

Mrs. Linde. You must delay him. Go in to him in the meantime. I will come back as soon as I can. (*She goes out hurriedly through the hall door.*)

Nora (*goes to* HELMER'S *door, opens it and peeps in.*) Torvald!

Helmer (*from the inner room*). Well? May I venture at last to come into my own room again? Come along, Rank, now you will see— (*Halting in the doorway.*) But what is this?

Nora. What is what, dear?

Helmer. Rank led me to expect a splendid transformation.

Rank (*in the doorway*). I understood so, but evidently I was mistaken.

Nora. Yes, nobody is to have the chance of admiring me in my dress until to-morrow.

Helmer. But, my dear Nora, you look so worn out. Have you been practising too much?

Nora. No, I have not practised at all.

Helmer. But you will need to—

Nora. Yes, indeed I shall, Torvald. But I can't get on a bit without you to help me; I have absolutely forgotten the whole thing.

Helmer. Oh, we will soon work it up again.

Nora. Yes, help me, Torvald. Promise that you will!

I am so nervous about it—all the people—. You must give yourself up to me entirely this evening. Not the tiniest bit of business—you mustn't even take a pen in your hand. Will you promise, Torvald dear?

Helmer. I promise. This evening I will be wholly and absolutely at your service, you helpless little mortal. Ah, by the way, first of all I will just— (*Goes towards the hall-door.*)

Nora. What are you going to do there?

Helmer. Only see if any letters have come.

Nora. No, no! don't do that, Torvald!

Helmer. Why not?

Nora. Torvald, please don't. There is nothing there.

Helmer. Well, let me look. (*Turns to go to the letter-box.* NORA, *at the piano, plays the first bars of the Tarantella.* HELMER *stops in the doorway.*) Aha!

Nora. I can't dance to-morrow if I don't practise with you.

Helmer (*going up to her*). Are you really so afraid of it, dear.

Nora. Yes, so dreadfully afraid of it. Let me practise at once; there is time now, before we go to dinner. Sit down and play for me, Torvald dear; criticise me, and correct me as you play.

Helmer. With great pleasure, if you wish me to. (*Sits down at the piano.*)

Nora (*takes out of the box a tambourine and a long variegated shawl. She hastily drapes the shawl round her. Then she springs to the front of the stage and calls out*). Now play for me! I am going to dance!

(HELMER *plays and* NORA *dances.* RANK *stands by the piano behind* HELMER, *and looks on*).

Helmer (*as he plays*). Slower, slower!

Nora. I can't do it any other way.

Helmer. Not so violently, Nora!

Nora. This is the way.

Helmer (*stops playing*). No, no—that is not a bit right.

Nora (*laughing and swinging the tambourine*). Didn't I tell you so?

Rank. Let me play for her.

Helmer (*getting up*). Yes, do. I can correct her better then.

(RANK *sits down at the piano and plays.* NORA *dances more and more wildly.* HELMER *has taken up a position beside the stove, and during her dance gives her frequent instructions. She does not seem to hear him; her hair comes down and falls over her shoulders; she pays no attention to it, but goes on dancing. Enter* Mrs. LINDE.)

Mrs. Linde (*standing as if spell-bound in the doorway*). Oh!—

Nora (*as she dances*). Such fun, Christine!

Helmer. My dear darling Nora, you are dancing as if your life depended on it.

Nora. So it does.

Helmer. Stop, Rank; this is sheer madness. Stop, I tell you! (RANK *stops playing, and* NORA *suddenly stands still.* HELMER *goes up to her.*) I could never have believed it. You have forgotten everything I taught you.

Nora (*throwing away the tambourine*). There, you see.

Helmer. You will want a lot of coaching.

Nora. Yes, you see how much I need it. You must coach me up to the last minute. Promise me that, Torvald!

Helmer. You can depend on me.

Nora. You must not think of anything but me, either to-day or to-morrow; you mustn't open a single letter—not even open the letter-box—

Helmer. Ah, you are still afraid of that fellow—

Nora. Yes, indeed I am.

Helmer. Nora, I can tell from your looks that there is a letter from him lying there.

Nora. I don't know; I think there is; but you must not read anything of that kind now. Nothing horrid must come between us till this is all over.

Rank (*whispers to* HELMER). You mustn't contradict her.

Helmer (*taking her in his arms*). The child shall have her way. But to-morrow night, after you have danced—

Nora. Then you will be free. (*The* MAID *appears in the doorway to the right*).

Maid. Dinner is served, ma'am.

Nora. We will have champagne, Helen.

Maid. Very good, ma'am. [*Exit.*

Helmer. Hullo!—are we going to have a banquet?

Nora. Yes, a champagne banquet till the small hours. (*Calls out.*) And a few macaroons, Helen—lots, just for once!

Helmer. Come, come, don't be so wild and nervous. Be my own little skylark, as you used.

Nora. Yes, dear, I will. But go in now and you too, Doctor Rank. Christine, you must help me to do up my hair.

Rank (*whispers to* HELMER *as they go out*). I suppose there is nothing — she is not expecting anything?

Helmer. Far from it, my dear fellow; it is simply nothing more than this childish nervousness I was telling you of. (*They go into the right-hand room.*)

Nora. Well!

Mrs. Linde. Gone out of town.

Nora. I could tell from your face.

Mrs. Linde. He is coming home to-morrow evening. I wrote a note for him.

Nora. You should have let it alone; you must prevent nothing. After all, it is splendid to be waiting for a wonderful thing to happen.

Mrs. Linde. What is it that you are waiting for?

Nora. Oh, you wouldn't understand. Go in to them, I will come in a moment. (Mrs. LINDE *goes into the dining-room.* NORA *stands still for a little while, as if to compose herself. Then she looks at her watch.*) Five o'clock. Seven hours till midnight; and then four-and-twenty hours till the next midnight. Then the Tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

Helmer (*from the doorway on the right*). Where's my little skylark?

Nora (*going to him with her arms outstretched*). Here she is!

ACT III

(THE SAME SCENE.—*The table has been placed in the middle of the stage, with chairs round it. A lamp is burning on the table. The door into the hall stands open. Dance music is heard in the room above.* Mrs. LINDE *is sitting at the table idly turning over the leaves of a book; she tries to read, but does not seem able to collect her thoughts. Every now and then she listens intently for a sound at the outer door.*)

Mrs. Linde (*looking at her watch*). Not yet—and the time is nearly up. If only he does not—. (*Listens again.*) Ah, there he is. (*Goes into the hall and opens the outer door carefully. Light footsteps are heard on the stairs. She whispers.*) Come in. There is no one here.

Krogstad (*in the doorway*). I found a note from you at home. What does this mean?

Mrs. Linde. It is absolutely necessary that I should have a talk with you.

Krogstad. Really? And is it absolutely necessary that it should be here?

Mrs. Linde. It is impossible where I live; there is no private entrance to my rooms. Come in; we are quite alone. The maid is asleep, and the Helmers are at the dance upstairs.

Krogstad (*coming into the room*). Are the Helmers really at a dance to-night?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, why not?

Krogstad. Certainly—why not?

Mrs. Linde. Now, Nils, let us have a talk.

Krogstad. Can we two have anything to talk about.

Mrs. Linde. We have a great deal to talk about.

Krogstad. I shouldn't have thought so.

Mrs. Linde. No, you have never properly understood me.

Krogstad. Was there anything else to understand except what was obvious to all the world—a heartless woman jilts a man when a more lucrative chance turns up.

Mrs. Linde. Do you believe I am as absolutely heartless as all that? And do you believe that I did it with a light heart?

Krogstad. Didn't you?

Mrs. Linde. Nils, did you really think that?

Krogstad. If it were as you say, why did you write to me as you did at the time?

Mrs. Linde. I could do nothing else. As I had to break with you, it was my duty also to put an end to all that you felt for me.

Krogstad (*wringing his hands*). So that was it. And all this—only for the sake of money!

Mrs. Linde. You must not forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils; your prospects seemed hopeless then.

Krogstad. That may be so, but you had no right to throw me over for any one else's sake.

Mrs. Linde. Indeed I don't know. Many a time did I ask myself if I had the right to do it.

Krogstad (*more gently*). When I lost you, it was as if all the solid ground went from under my feet. Look at me now—I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a bit of wreckage.

Mrs. Linde. But help may be near.

Krogstad. It *was* near; but then you came and stood in my way.

Mrs. Linde. Unintentionally, Nils. It was only today that I learnt it was your place I was going to take in the bank.

Krogstad. I believe you, if you say so. But now that you know it, are you not going to give it up to me?

Mrs. Linde. No, because that would not benefit you in the least.

Krogstad. Oh, benefit, benefit—I would have done it whether or no.

Mrs. Linde. I have learnt to act prudently. Life, and hard, bitter necessity have taught me that.

Krogstad. And life has taught me not to believe in fine speeches.

Mrs. Linde. Then life has taught you something very reasonable. But deeds you must believe in?

Krogstad. What do you mean by that?

Mrs. Linde. You said you were like a shipwrecked man clinging to some wreckage.

Krogstad. I had good reason to say so.

Mrs. Linde. Well, I am like a shipwrecked woman clinging to some wreckage—no one to mourn for, no one to care for.

Krogstad. It was your own choice.

Mrs. Linde. There was no other choice—then.

Krogstad. Well, what now?

Mrs. Linde. Nils, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people could join forces?

Krogstad. What are you saying?

Mrs. Linde. Two on the same piece of wreckage would stand a better chance than each on their own.

Krogstad. Christine!

Mrs. Linde. What do you suppose brought me to town?

Krogstad. Do you mean that you gave me a thought?

Mrs. Linde. I could not endure life without work. All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked, and it has been my greatest and only pleasure. But now I am quite alone in the world—my life is so dreadfully empty and I feel so forsaken. There is not the least pleasure in working for one's self. Nils, give me someone and something to work for.

Krogstad. I don't trust that. It is nothing but a woman's overstrained sense of generosity that prompts you to make such an offer of yourself.

Mrs. Linde. Have you ever noticed anything of the sort in me?

Krogstad. Could you really do it? Tell me—do you know all about my past life?

Mrs. Linde. Yes.

Krogstad. And do you know what they think of me here?

Mrs. Linde. You seemed to me to imply that with me you might have been quite another man.

Krogstad. I am certain of it.

Mrs. Linde. Is it too late now?

Krogstad. Christine, are you saying this deliberately? Yes, I am sure you are. I see it in your face. Have you really the courage, then—?

Mrs. Linde. I want to be a mother to someone, and your children need a mother. We two need each other. Nils, I have faith in your real character—I can dare anything together with you.

Krogstad (*grasps her hands*). Thanks, thanks, Christine! Now I shall find a way to clear myself in the eyes of the world. Ah, but I forgot—

Mrs. Linde (*listening*). Hush! The Tarantella! Go, go!

Krogstad. Why? What is it?

Mrs. Linde. Do you hear them up there? When that is over, we may expect them back.

Krogstad. Yes, yes—I will go. But it is all no use. Of course you are not aware what steps I have taken in the matter of the Helmers.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I know all about that.

Krogstad. And in spite of that have you the courage to—?

Mrs. Linde. I understand very well to what lengths a man like you might be driven by despair.

Krogstad. If I could only undo what I have done!

Mrs. Linde. You cannot. Your letter is lying in the letter-box now.

Krogstad. Are you sure of that?

Mrs. Linde. Quite sure, but—

Krogstad (*with a searching look at her*). Is that what it all means?—that you want to save your friend at any cost? Tell me frankly. Is that it?

Mrs. Linde. Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for another's sake, doesn't do it a second time.

Krogstad. I will ask for my letter back.

Mrs. Linde. No, no.

Krogstad. Yes, of course I will. I will wait here till Helmer comes; I will tell him he must give me my letter back—that it only concerns my dismissal—that he is not to read it—

Mrs. Linde. No, Nils, you must not recall your letter.

Krogstad. But, tell me, wasn't it for that very purpose that you asked me to meet you here?

Mrs. Linde. In my first moment of fright, it was. But twenty-four hours have elapsed since then, and in that time I have witnessed incredible things in this house. Helmer must know all about it. This unhappy secret must be disclosed; they must have a complete understanding between them, which is impossible with all this concealment and falsehood going on.

Krogstad. Very well, if you will take the responsibility. But there is one thing I can do in any case, and I shall do it at once.

Mrs. Linde (*listening*). You must be quick and go! The dance is over; we are not safe a moment longer.

Krogstad. I will wait for you below.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, do. You must see me back to my door.

Krogstad. I have never had such an amazing piece of good fortune in my life! (*Goes out through the outer door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.*)

Mrs. Linde (*tidying up the room and laying her hat and cloak ready*). What a difference! what a difference! Someone to work for and live for—a home to bring comfort into. That I will do, indeed. I wish they would be quick and come— (*Listens*). Ah, there they are now. I must put on my things. (*Takes up her hat and cloak.* HELMER'S *and* NORA'S *voices are heard outside; a key is turned, and* HELMER *brings* NORA *almost by force into the hall. She is in an Italian costume with a large black shawl round her; he is in evening dress, and a black domino which is flying open.*)

Nora (*hanging back in the doorway, and struggling*

with him). No, no, no!—don't take me in. I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early.

Helmer. But, my dearest Nora—

Nora. Please, Torvald dear—please, *please*—only an hour more.

Helmer. Not a single minute, my sweet Nora. You know that was our agreement. Come along into the room; you are catching cold standing there. (*He brings her gently into the room, in spite of her resistance.*)

Mrs. Linde. Good-evening.

Nora. Christine!

Helmer. You here, so late, Mrs. Linde?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, you must excuse me; I was so anxious to see Nora in her dress.

Nora. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, unfortunately I came too late, you had already gone upstairs; and I thought I couldn't go away again without having seen you.

Helmer (*taking off* NORA'S *shawl*). Yes, take a good look at her. I think she is worth looking at. Isn't she charming, Mrs. Linde?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, indeed she is.

Helmer. Doesn't she look remarkably pretty? Everyone thought so at the dance. But she is terribly self-willed, this sweet little person. What are we to do with her? You will hardly believe that I had almost to bring her away by force.

Nora. Torvald, you will repent not having let me stay, even if it were only for half an hour.

Helmer. Listen to her, Mrs. Linde! She had danced her Tarantella, and it had been a tremendous success, as it deserved — although possibly the performance was a trifle too realistic—a little more so, I mean, than was strictly compatible with the limitations of art. But never mind about that! The chief thing is, she had made a success—she had made a tremendous success. Do you think I was going to let her remain there after that, and spoil the effect? No, indeed! I took my charming little Capri maiden—my capricious little Capri maiden, I should say—on my arm; took one

quick turn round the room; a curtsey on either side, and, as they say in novels, the beautiful apparition disappeared. An exit ought always to be effective, Mrs. Linde; but that is what I cannot make Nora understand. Pooh! this room is hot. (*Throws his domino on a chair, and opens the door of his room.*) Hullo! it's all dark in here. Oh, of course—excuse me—. (*He goes in, and lights some candles.*)

Nora (*in a hurried and breathless whisper*). Well?

Mrs. Linde (*in a low voice*). I have had a talk with him.

Nora. Yes, and—

Mrs. Linde. Nora, you must tell your husband all about it.

Nora (*in an expressionless voice*). I knew it.

Mrs. Linde. You have nothing to be afraid of as far as Krogstad is concerned; but you must tell him.

Nora. I won't tell him.

Mrs. Linde. Then the letter will.

Nora. Thank you, Christine. Now I know what I must do. Hush—!

Helmer (*coming in again*). Well, Mrs. Linde, have you admired her?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, and now I will say good-night.

Helmer. What, already? Is this yours, this knitting?

Mrs. Linde (*taking it*). Yes, thank you, I had very nearly forgotten it.

Helmer. So you knit?

Mrs. Linde. Of course.

Helmer. Do you know, you ought to embroider.

Mrs. Linde. Really? Why?

Helmer. Yes, it's far more becoming. Let me show you. You hold the embroidery thus in your left hand, and use the needle with the right—like this—with a long, easy sweep. Do you see?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, perhaps—

Helmer. But in the case of knitting—that can never be anything but ungraceful; look here—the arms close together, the knitting-needles going up and down—it has a sort of Chinese effect—. That was really excellent champagne they gave us.

Mrs. Linde. Well,—good-night, Nora, and don't be self-willed any more.

Helmer. That's right, Mrs. Linde.

Mrs. Linde. Good-night, Mr. Helmer.

Helmer (*accompanying her to the door*). Good-night, good-night. I hope you will get home all right. I should be very happy to—but you haven't any great distance to go. Good-night, good-night. (*She goes out; he shuts the door after her, and comes in again.*) Ah!—at last we have got rid of her. She is a frightful bore, that woman.

Nora. Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

Helmer. No, not in the least.

Nora. Nor sleepy?

Helmer. Not a bit. On the contrary, I feel extraordinarily lively. And you?—you really look both tired and sleepy.

Nora. Yes, I am very tired. I want to go to sleep at once.

Helmer. There, you see it was quite right of me not to let you stay there any longer.

Nora. Everything you do is quite right, Torvald.

Helmer (*kissing her on the forehead*). Now my little skylark is speaking reasonably. Did you notice what good spirits Rank was in this evening?

Nora. Really? Was he? I didn't speak to him at all.

Helmer. And I very little, but I have not for a long time seen him in such good form. (*Looks for a while at her and then goes nearer to her.*) It is delightful to be at home by ourselves again, to be all alone with you—you fascinating, charming little darling!

Nora. Don't look at me like that, Torvald.

Helmer. Why shouldn't I not look at my dearest treasure?—at all the beauty that is mine, all my very own?

Nora (*going to the other side of the table*). You mustn't say things like that to me to-night.

Helmer (*following her*). You have still got the Tarantella in your blood, I see. And it makes you

more captivating than ever. Listen—the guests are beginning to go now. (*In a lower voice.*) Nora—soon the whole house will be quiet.

Nora. Yes, I hope so.

Helmer. Yes, my own darling Nora. Do you know, when I am out at a party with you like this, why I speak so little to you, keep away from you, and only send a stolen glance in your direction now and then?—do you know why I do that? It is because I make believe to myself that we are secretly in love, and you are my secretly promised bride, and that no one suspects there is anything between us.

Nora. Yes, yes—I know very well your thoughts are with me all the time.

Helmer. And when we are leaving, and I am putting the shawl over your beautiful young shoulders—on your lovely neck—then I imagine that you are my young bride and that we have just come from the wedding, and I am bringing you for the first time into our home—to be alone with you for the first time—quite alone with my shy little darling! All this evening I have longed for nothing but you. When I watched the seductive figures of the Tarantella, my blood was on fire; I could endure it no longer, and that was why I brought you down so early—

Nora. Go away, Torvald! You must let me go. I won't—

Helmer. What's that? You're joking, my little Nora! You won't—you won't? Am I not your husband—? (*A knock is heard at the outer door.*)

Nora (*starting*). Did you hear—?

Helmer (*going into the hall*). Who is it?

Rank (*outside*). It is I. May I come in for a moment?

Helmer (*in a fretful whisper*). Oh, what does he want now? (*Aloud.*) Wait a minute? (*Unlocks the door.*) Come, that's kind of you not to pass by our door.

Rank. I thought I heard your voice, and felt as if I should like to look in. (*With a swift glance round.*)

Ah, yes!—these dear familiar rooms. You are very happy and cosy in here, you two.

Helmer. It seems to me that you looked after yourself pretty well upstairs too.

Rank. Excellently. Why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't one enjoy everything in this world?—at any rate as much as one can, and as long as one can. The wine was capital—

Helmer. Especially the champagne.

Rank. So you noticed that too? It is almost incredible how much I managed to put away!

Nora. Torvald drank a great deal of champagne to-night, too.

Rank. Did he?

Nora. Yes, and he is always in such good spirits afterwards.

Rank. Well, why should one not enjoy a merry evening after a well-spent day.

Helmer. Well spent? I am afraid I can't take credit for that.

Rank (*clapping him on the back*). But I can, you know!

Nora. Doctor Rank, you must have been occupied with some scientific investigation to-day.

Rank. Exactly.

Helmer. Just listen!—little Nora talking about scientific investigations!

Nora. And may I congratulate you on the result?

Rank. Indeed you may.

Nora. Was it favourable, then?

Rank. The best possible, for both doctor and patient—certainty.

Nora (*quickly and searchingly*). Certainty?

Rank. Absolute certainty. So wasn't I entitled to make a merry evening of it after that?

Nora. Yes, you certainly were, Doctor Rank.

Helmer. I think so too, so long as you don't have to pay for it in the morning.

Rank. Oh well, one can't have anything in this life without paying for it

Nora. Doctor Rank—are you fond of fancy-dress balls?

Rank. Yes, if there is a fine lot of pretty costumes.

Nora. Tell me—what shall we two wear at the next?

Helmer. Little featherbrain!—are you thinking of the next already?

Rank. We two? Yes, I can tell you. You shall go as a good fairy—

Helmer. Yes, but what do you suggest as an appropriate costume for that?

Rank. Let your wife go dressed just as she is in everyday life.

Helmer. That was really very prettily turned. But can't you tell us what you will be?

Rank. Yes, my dear friend, I have quite made up my mind about that.

Helmer. Well?

Rank. At the next fancy-dress ball I shall be invisible.

Helmer. That's a good joke!

Rank. There is a big black hat—have you never heard of hats that make you invisible? If you put one on, no one can see you.

Helmer (*suppressing a smile*). Yes, you are quite right.

Rank. But I am clean forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar—one of the dark Havanas.

Helmer. With the greatest pleasure. (*Offers him his case.*)

Rank (*takes a cigar and cuts off the end*). Thanks.

Nora (*striking a match*). Let me give you a light.

Rank. Thank you. (*She holds the match for him to light his cigar.*) And now good-bye!

Helmer. Good-bye, good-bye, dear old man!

Nora. Sleep well, Doctor Rank.

Rank. Thank you for that wish.

Nora. Wish me the same.

Rank. You? Well, if you want me to sleep well! And thanks for the light. (*He nods to them both and goes out.*)

Helmer (*in a subdued voice*). He has drunk more than he ought.

Nora (*absently*). Maybe. (*Helmer takes a bunch of keys out his pocket and goes into the hall.*) Torvald! what are you going to do there?

Helmer. Empty the letter-box; it is quite full; there will be no room to put the newspaper in to-morrow morning.

Nora. Are you going to work to-night?

Helmer. You know quite well I'm not. What is this? Some one has been at the lock.

Nora. At the lock—?

Helmer. Yes, someone has. What can it mean? I should never have thought the maid—. Here is a broken hairpin. Nora, it is one of yours.

Nora (*quickly*). Then it must have been the children—

Helmer. Then you must get them out of those ways. There, at last I have got it open. (*Takes out the contents of the letter-box, and calls to the kitchen.*) Helen!—Helen, put out the light over the front door. (*Goes back into the room and shuts the door into the hall. He holds out his hand full of letters.*) Look at that—look what a heap of them there are. (*Turning them over.*) What on earth is that?

Nora (*at the window*). The letter—No! Torvald, no!

Helmer. Two cards—of Rank's.

Nora. Of Doctor Rank's?

Helmer (*looking at them*). Doctor Rank. They were on the top. He must have put them in when he went out.

Nora. Is there anything written on them?

Helmer. There is a black cross over the name. Look there—what an uncomfortable idea! It looks as if he were announcing his own death.

Nora. It is just what he is doing.

Helmer. What? Do you know anything about it? Has he said anything to you?

Nora. Yes. He told me that when the cards came it would be his leave-taking from us. He means to shut himself up and die.

Helmer. My poor old friend. Certainly I knew we should not have him very long with us. But so soon! And so he hides himself away like a wounded animal.

Nora. If it has to happen, it is best it should be without a word—don't you think so, Torvald?

Helmer (*walking up and down*). He had so grown into our lives. I can't think of him as having gone out of them. He, with his sufferings and his loneliness, was like a cloudy background to our sunlit happiness. Well, perhaps it is best so. For him, anyway. (*Standing still.*) And perhaps for us too, Nora. We two are thrown quite upon each other now. (*Puts his arms round her.*) My darling wife, I don't feel as if I could hold you tight enough. Do you know, Nora, I have often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life's blood, and everything, for your sake.

Nora (*disengages herself, and says firmly and decidedly*). Now you must read your letters, Torvald.

Helmer. No, no; not to-night. I want to be with you, my darling wife.

Nora. With the thought of your friend's death—

Helmer. You are right, it has affected us both. Something ugly has come between us—the thought of the horrors of death. We must try and rid our minds of that. Until then—we will each go to our own room.

Nora (*hanging on his neck*). Good-night, Torvald—Good-night!

Helmer (*kissing her on the forehead*). Good-night, my little singing-bird. Sleep sound, Nora. Now I will read my letters through. (*He takes his letters and goes into his room, shutting the door after him.*)

Nora (*gropes distractedly about, seizes* HELMER'S *domino, throws it round her, while she says in quick, hoarse, spasmodic whispers*). Never to see him again. Never! Never! (*Puts her shawl over her head.*) Never to see my children again either—never again. Never! Never! —Ah! the icy, black water—the unfathomable depths—If only it were over! He has got it now—now he is reading it. Good-bye, Torvald and my children! (*She*

is about to rush out through the hall, when HELMER *opens his door hurriedly and stands with an open letter in his hand.*)

Helmer. Nora!

Nora. Ah!—

Helmer. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

Nora. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me get out!

Helmer (*holding her back*). Where are you going?

Nora (*trying to get free*). You shan't save me, Torvald!

Helmer (*reeling*). True? Is this true, that I read here? Horrible! No, no—it is impossible that it can be true.

Nora. It is true. I have loved you above everything else in the world.

Helmer. Oh, don't let us have any silly excuses.

Nora (*taking a step towards him*). Torvald—!

Helmer. Miserable creature—what have you done?

Nora. Let me go. You shall not suffer for my sake. You shall not take it upon yourself.

Helmer. No tragedy airs, please. (*Locks the hall door.*) Here you shall stay and give me an explanation. Do you understand what you have done? Answer me? Do you understand what you have done?

Nora (*looks steadily at him and says with a growing look of coldness in her face*). Yes, now I am beginning to understand thoroughly.

Helmer (*walking about the room*). What a horrible awakening! All these eight years—she who was my joy and pride—a hypocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal! The unutterable ugliness of it all!—For shame! For shame! (NORA *is silent and looks steadily at him. He stops in front of her.*) I ought to have suspected that something of the sort would happen. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle—be silent!—all your father's want of principle has come out in you. No religion, no morality, no sense of duty—. How I am punished for having winked at what he did! I did it for your sake, and this is how you repay me.

Nora. Yes, that's just it.

Helmer. Now you have destroyed all my happiness. You have ruined all my future. It is horrible to think of! I am in the power of an unscrupulous man; he can do what he likes with me, ask anything he likes of me, give me any orders he pleases—I dare not refuse. And I must sink to such miserable depths because of a thoughtless woman!

Nora. When I am out of the way, you will be free.

Helmer. No fine speeches, please. Your father had always plenty of those ready, too. What good would it be to me if you were out of the way, as you say? Not the slightest. He can make the affair known everywhere; and if he does, I may be falsely suspected of having been a party to your criminal action. Very likely people will think I was behind it all—that it was I who prompted you! And I have to thank you for all this—you whom I have cherished during the whole of our married life. Do you understand now what it is you have done for me?

Nora (*coldly and quietly*). Yes.

Helmer. It is so incredible that I can't take it in. But we must come to some understanding. Take off that shawl. Take it off, I tell you. I must try and appease him some way or another. The matter must be hushed up at any cost. And as for you and me, it must appear as if everything between us were just as before — but naturally only in the eyes of the world. You will still remain in my house, that is a matter of course. But I shall not allow you to bring up the children; I dare not trust them to you. To think that I should be obliged to say so to one whom I have loved so dearly, and whom I still—. No, that is all over. From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance—

(*A ring is heard at the front-door bell.*)

Helmer (*with a start*). What is that? So late! Can the worst—? Can he—? Hide yourself, Nora. Say you are ill.

(NORA *stands motionless.* HELMER *goes and unlocks the hall door.*)

Maid (*half-dressed, comes to the door*). A letter for the mistress.

Helmer. Give it to me. (*Takes the letter, and shuts the door.*) Yes, it is from him. You shall not have it; I will read it myself.

Nora. Yes, read it.

Helmer (*standing by the lamp*). I scarcely have the courage to do it. It may mean ruin for both of us. No, I must know. (*Tears open the letter, runs his eye over a few lines, looks at a paper enclosed, and gives a shout of joy.*) Nora! (*She looks at him questioningly.*) Nora!—No, I must read it once again—. Yes, it is true! I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

Nora. And I?

Helmer. You too, of course; we are both saved, both you and I. Look, he sends you your bond back. He says he regrets and repents—that a happy change in his life—never mind what he says! We are saved, Nora! No one can do anything to you. Oh, Nora, Nora!—no, first I must destroy these hateful things. Let me see—. (*Takes a look at the bond.*) No, no, I won't look at it. The whole thing shall be nothing but a bad dream to me. (*Tears up the bond and both letters, throws them all into the stove, and watches them burn.*) There—now it doesn't exist any longer. He says that since Christmas Eve you—. These must have been three dreadful days for you, Nora.

Nora. I have fought a hard fight these three days.

Helmer. And suffered agonies, and seen no way out but—. No, we won't call any of the horrors to mind. We will only shout with joy, and keep saying, "It's all over! It's all over!" Listen to me, Nora. You don't seem to realise that it is all over. What is this?—such a cold, set face! My poor little Nora, I quite understand; you don't feel as if you could believe that I have forgiven you. But it is true, Nora, I swear it; I have forgiven you everything. I know that what you did, you did out of love for me.

Nora. That is true.

Helmer. You have loved me as a wife ought to love

her husband. Only you had not sufficient knowledge to judge of the means you used. But do you suppose you are any the less dear to me, because you don't understand how to act on your own responsibility? No, no; only lean on me; I will advise you and direct you. I should not be a man if this womanly helplessness did not just give you a double attractiveness in my eyes. You must not think any more about the hard things I said in my first moment of consternation, when I thought everything was going to overwhelm me. I have forgiven you, Nora; I swear to you I have forgiven you.

Nora. Thank you for your forgiveness. (*She goes out through the door to the right.*)

Helmer. No, don't go—. (*Looks in.*) What are you doing in there?

Nora (*from within*). Taking off my fancy dress.

Helmer (*standing at the open door*). Yes, do. Try and calm yourself, and make your mind easy again, my frightened little singing-bird. Be at rest, and feel secure; I have broad wings to shelter you under. (*Walks up and down by the door.*) How warm and cosy our home is, Nora. Here is shelter for you; here I will protect you like a hunted dove that I have saved from a hawk's claws; I will bring peace to your poor beating heart. It will come, little by little, Nora, believe me. To-morrow morning you will look upon it all quite differently; soon everything will be just as it was before. Very soon you won't need me to assure you that I have forgiven you; you will yourself feel the certainty that I have done so. Can you suppose I should ever think of such a thing as repudiating you, or even reproaching you? You have no idea what a true man's heart is like, Nora. There is something so indescribably sweet and satisfying, to a man, in the knowledge that he has forgiven his wife—forgiven her freely, and with all his heart. It seems as if that had made her, as it were, doubly his own; he has given her a new life, so to speak; and she has in a way become both wife and child to him. So you shall be for me after this, my little scared, helpless darling. Have no anxiety about

anything, Nora; only be frank and open with me, and I will serve as will and conscience both to you—. What is this? Not gone to bed? Have you changed your things?

Nora (*in everyday dress*). Yes, Torvald, I have changed my things now.

Helmer. But what for?—so late as this.

Nora. I shall not sleep to-night.

Helmer. But, my dear Nora—

Nora (*looking at her watch*). It is not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald. You and I have much to say to one another. (*She sits down at one side of the table.*)

Helmer. Nora—what is this?—this cold, set face?

Nora. Sit down. It will take some time; I have a lot to talk over with you.

Helmer (*sits down at the opposite side of the table*). You alarm me, Nora!—and I don't understand you.

Nora. No, that is just it. You don't understand me, and I have never understood you either—before to-night. No, you mustn't interrupt me. You must simply listen to what I say. Torvald, this is a settling of accounts.

Helmer. What do you mean by that?

Nora (*after a short silence*). Isn't there one thing that strikes you as strange in our sitting here like this.

Helmer. What is that?

Nora. We have been married now eight years. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversation?

Helmer. What do you mean by serious?

Nora. In all these eight years—longer than that—from the very beginning of our acquaintance, we have never exchanged a word on any serious subject.

Helmer. Was it likely that I would be continually and for ever telling you about worries that you could not help me to bear?

Nora. I am not speaking about business matters. I say that we have never sat down in earnest together to try and get at the bottom of anything.

Helmer. But, dearest Nora, would it have been any good to you?

Nora. That is just it; you have never understood me. I have been greatly wronged, Torvald—first by papa and then by you.

Helmer. What! By us two—by us two, who have loved you better than anyone else in the world?

Nora (*shaking her head*). You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me.

Helmer. Nora, what do I hear you saying?

Nora. It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you—

Helmer. What sort of an expression is that to use about our marriage?

Nora (*undisturbed*). I mean that I was simply transferred from papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you—or else I pretended to, I am really not quite sure which—I think sometimes the one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman—just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.

Helmer. How unreasonable and how ungrateful you are, Nora! Have you not been happy here?

Nora. No, I have never been happy. I thought I was, but it has never really been so.

Helmer. Not—not happy!

Nora. No, only merry. And you have always been so kind to me. But our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa's doll-child; and here the children have been

my dolls. I thought it great fun when you played with me, just as they thought it great fun when I played with them. That is what our marriage has been, Torvald.

Helmer. There is some truth in what you say—exaggerated and strained as your view of it is. But for the future it shall be different. Playtime shall be over, and lesson-time shall begin.

Nora. Whose lessons? Mine, or the children's?

Helmer. Both yours and the children's, my darling Nora.

Nora. Alas, Torvald, you are not the man to educate me into being a proper wife for you.

Helmer. And you can say that!

Nora. And I—how am I fitted to bring up the children?

Helmer. Nora!

Nora. Didn't you say so yourself a little while ago—that you dare not trust me to bring them up?

Helmer. In a moment of anger! Why do you pay any heed to that?

Nora. Indeed, you were perfectly right. I am not fit for the task. There is another task I must undertake first. I must try and educate myself—you are not the man to help me in that. I must do that for myself. And that is why I am going to leave you now.

Helmer (*springing up*). What do you say?

Nora. I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer.

Helmer. Nora, Nora!

Nora. I am going away from here now, at once. I am sure Christine will take me in for the night—

Helmer. You are out of your mind! I won't allow it! I forbid you!

Nora. It is no use forbidding me anything any longer. I will take with me what belongs to myself. I will take nothing from you, either now or later.

Helmer. What sort of madness is this!

Nora. To-morrow I shall go home—I mean, to my

old home. It will be easiest for me to find something to do there.

Helmer. You blind, foolish woman!

Nora. I must try and get some sense, Torvald.

Helmer. To desert your home, your husband and your children! And you don't consider what people will say!

Nora. I cannot consider that at all. I only know that it is necessary for me.

Helmer. It's shocking. This is how you would neglect your most sacred duties.

Nora. What do you consider my most sacred duties?

Helmer. Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?

Nora. I have other duties just as sacred.

Helmer. That you have not. What duties could those be?

Nora. Duties to myself.

Helmer. Before all else, you are a wife and a mother.

Nora. I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being, just as you are—or, at all events, that I must try and become one. I know quite well, Torvald, that most people would think you right, and that views of that kind are to be found in books; but I can no longer content myself with what most people say, or with what is found in books. I must think over things for myself and get to understand them.

Helmer. Can you not understand your place in your own home? Have you not a reliable guide in such matters as that?—have you no religion?

Nora. I am afraid, Torvald, I do not exactly know what religion is.

Helmer. What are you saying?

Nora. I know nothing but what the clergyman said, when I went to be confirmed. He told us that religion was this, and that, and the other. When I am away from all this, and am alone, I will look into that matter too. I will see if what the clergyman said is true, or at all events if it is true for me.

Helmer. This is unheard of in a girl of your age! But if religion cannot lead you aright, let me try and awaken your conscience. I suppose you have some moral sense? Or—answer me—am I to think you have none?

Nora. I assure you, Torvald, that is not an easy question to answer. I really don't know. The thing perplexes me altogether. I only know that you and I look at it in quite a different light. I am learning, too, that the law is quite another thing from what I supposed; but I find it impossible to convince myself that the law is right. According to it a woman has no right to spare her old dying father, or to save her husband's life. I can't believe that.

Helmer. You talk like a child. You don't understand the conditions of the world in which you live.

Nora. No, I don't. But now I am going to try. I am going to see if I can make out who is right, the world or I.

Helmer. You are ill, Nora; you are delirious; I almost think you are out of your mind.

Nora. I have never felt my mind so clear and certain as to-night.

Helmer. And is it with a clear and certain mind that you forsake your husband and your children.

Nora. Yes, it is.

Helmer. Then there is only one possible explanation.

Nora. What is that?

Helmer. You do not love me any more.

Nora. No, that is just it.

Helmer. Nora!—and you can say that?

Nora. It gives me great pain, Torvald, for you have always been so kind to me, but I cannot help it. I do not love you any more.

Helmer (*regaining his composure*). Is that a clear and certain conviction too?

Nora. Yes, absolutely clear and certain. That is the reason why I will not stay here any longer.

Helmer. And can you tell me what I have done to forfeit your love?

Nora. Yes, indeed I can. It was to-night, when the wonderful thing did not happen; then I saw you were not the man I had thought you.

Helmer. Explain yourself better—I don't understand you.

Nora. I have waited so patiently for eight years; for, goodness knows, I knew very well that wonderful things don't happen every day. Then this horrible misfortune came upon me; and then I felt quite certain that the wonderful thing was going to happen at last. When Krogstad's letter was lying out there, never for a moment did I imagine that you would consent to accept this man's conditions. I was so absolutely certain that you would say to him: Publish the thing to the whole world. And when that was done—

Helmer. Yes, what then?—when I had exposed my wife to shame and disgrace?

Nora. When that was done, I was so absolutely certain, you would come forward and take everything upon yourself, and say: I am the guilty one.

Helmer. Nora—!

Nora. You mean that I would never have accepted such a sacrifice on your part? No, of course not. But what would my assurances have been worth against yours? That was the wonderful thing which I hoped for and feared; and it was to prevent that, that I wanted to kill myself.

Helmer. I would gladly work night and day for you, Nora—bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves.

Nora. It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done.

Helmer. Oh, you think and talk like a heedless child.

Nora. Maybe. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over—and it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to you—when the whole thing was past, as far as you were concerned it was exactly as if nothing at all had happened. Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll, which you would in

future treat with doubly gentle care, because it was so brittle and fragile. (*Getting up.*) Torvald—it was then it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man, and had borne him three children—. Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into little bits!

Helmer (*sadly*). I see, I see. An abyss has opened between us—there is no denying it. But, Nora, would it not be possible to fill it up?

Nora. As I am now, I am no wife for you.

Helmer. I have it in me to become a different man.

Nora. Perhaps—if your doll is taken away from you.

Helmer. But to part!—to part from you! No, no, Nora, I can't understand that idea.

Nora (*going out to the right*). That makes it all the more certain that it must be done. (*She comes back with her cloak and hat and a small bag which she puts on a chair by the table.*)

Helmer. Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till to-morrow.

Nora (*putting on her cloak*). I cannot spend the night in a strange man's room.

Helmer. But can't we live here like brother and sister—?

Nora (*putting on her hat*). You know very well that would not last long. (*Puts the shawl round her.*) Good-bye, Torvald. I won't see the little ones. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I am now, I can be of no use to them.

Helmer. But some day, Nora—some day?

Nora. How can I tell? I have no idea what is going to become of me.

Helmer. But you are my wife, whatever becomes of you.

Nora. Listen, Torvald. I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband's house, as I am doing now, he is legally freed from all obligations towards her. In any case I set you free from all your obligations. You are not to feel yourself bound in the slightest way, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. See, here is your ring back. Give me mine.

Helmer. That too?

Nora. That too.

Helmer. Here it is.

Nora. That's right. Now it is all over. I have put the keys here. The maids know all about everything in the house—better than I do. To-morrow, after I have left her, Christine will come here and pack up my own things that I brought with me from home. I will have them sent after me.

Helmer. All over! All over!—Nora, shall you never think of me again?

Nora. I know I shall often think of you and the children and this house.

Helmer. May I write to you, Nora?

Nora. No—never. You must not do that.

Helmer. But at least let me send you—

Nora. Nothing—nothing—

Helmer. Let me help you if you are in want.

Nora. No. I can receive nothing from a stranger.

Helmer. Nora—can I never be anything more than a stranger to you?

Nora (*taking her bag*). Ah, Torvald, the most wonderful thing of all would have to happen.

Helmer. Tell me what that would be!

Nora. Both you and I would have to be so changed that—. Oh, Torvald, I don't believe any longer in wonderful things happening.

Helmer. But I will believe in it. Tell me? So changed that—?

Nora. That our life together would be a real wedlock. Good-bye. (*She goes out through the hall.*)

Helmer (*sinks down on a chair at the door and buries his face in his hands*). Nora! Nora! (*Looks round, and rises.*) Empty. She is gone. (*A hope flashes across his mind.*) The most wonderful thing of all—?

(*The sound of a door shutting is heard from below.*)

THE WILD DUCK

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Werle, a merchant and manufacturer.
Gregers Werle, his son.
Old Ekdal.
Hjalmar Ekdal, his son, a photographer.
Gina Ekdal, Hjalmar's wife.
Hedvig, their daughter, aged fourteen.
Mrs. Sörby, the elder Werle's housekeeper.
Relling, a doctor.
Molvik, an ex-student of theology.
Graaberg, a bookkeeper in Werle's office.
Pettersen, Werle's servant.
Jensen, a hired waiter.
A Flabby Guest.
A Thin-haired Guest.
A Short-sighted Guest.
Six other Guests at Werle's dinner-party.
Several hired Servants.

(*The first Act takes place in the elder Werle's house; the other four at Hjalmar Ekdal's.*)

THE WILD DUCK

ACT I

(SCENE—*A handsomely and comfortably furnished study in* WERLE'S *house. Bookcases and upholstered furniture; a desk, covered with papers and documents, in the middle of the floor; the lamps are lit and have green shades, producing a soft light in the room. At the back are folding doors which have been thrown open and the portières drawn back. Through these is visible a large and well-appointed room, brightly lit with lamps and branch candlesticks. A small private door, on the right-hand side of the study, leads to the office. On the left is a fireplace, with a cheerful fire, and beyond it folding doors leading to the dining-room.*

WERLE'S *servant* PETTERSEN, *in livery, and the hired waiter* JENSEN *in black, are setting the study in order. In the large room at the back two or three other waiters are moving about, tidying the room and lighting more candles. From within the dining-room the noise of the guests' talking and laughing can be heard; someone raps on a glass with a knife, silence follows and a toast is proposed; applause follows and the hum of conversation begins again.*)

Pettersen (*lighting a lamp on the mantelpiece and putting a shade over it*). Hark at 'em, Jensen; the old man's up now, making a long speech to propose Mrs. Sörby's health.

Jensen (*moving a chair forward*). Do you think what people say about those two is true, that there's something between them?

Pettersen. Goodness knows.

Jensen. He's been a gay old dog in his time, hasn't he?

Pettersen. Maybe.

Jensen. They say this dinner-party is in honour of his son.

Pettersen. Yes, he came home yesterday.

Jensen. I never knew old Werle had a son.

Pettersen. Oh yes, he has a son, but he sticks up at the works at Höidal; he hasn't once been in the town all the years I have been in service here.

A waiter (*in the doorway to the other room*). Pettersen, there is an old chap here who—

Pettersen (*muttering*). Devil take him, what is anyone coming now for!

(*Old* EKDAL *appears from the inner room. He is dressed in a weather-worn greatcoat with a high collar, carries a stick and a fur cap in his hands, and a paper parcel under his arm. He wears a dirty reddish-brown wig and a small grey moustache.*)

Pettersen (*going towards him*). Good Lord!—what do you want in here?

Ekdal (*in the doorway*). I want so badly to get into the office, Pettersen.

Pettersen. The office was closed an hour ago, and—

Ekdal. They told me that at the door, old man. But Graaberg is still there. Be a good chap, Pettersen, and let me slip in that way. (*Points to the private door.*) I've been that way before.

Pettersen. All right, you can go in. (*Opens the door.*) But, whatever you do, don't forget to go out the proper way, because we have got guests here.

Ekdal. Yes, yes—I know. Thanks, dear old Pettersen! My good old friend! Thanks! (*Under his breath.*) Old cod-fish! (*Goes into the office.* PETTERSEN *shuts the door after him.*)

Jensen. Is that fellow one of the clerks?

Pettersen. No, he only does odd jobs of copying when there is any wanted. But I can tell you old Ekdal was a fine fellow in his day.

Jensen. He looks as if he had seen better times.

Pettersen. That he has. He was a lieutenant, though you wouldn't think it.

Jensen. The deuce he was!

Pettersen. True as I'm alive. But he took to the timber trade, or something. They say he played old

Werle a remarkably dirty trick once. The two of them were in partnership up at Höidal at that time. Oh, I know all about old Ekdal, I do. Many's the glass of bitters or bottle of beer we've drunk together at Mother Eriksen's.

Jensen. I shouldn't have thought he had much to stand treat with.

Pettersen. Good Lord, Jensen, it's me that's stood the treat! Besides, I think one ought to be a bit civil to gentry that have come down in the world.

Jensen. Did he go bankrupt, then?

Pettersen. No, it was a deal worse than that. He went to gaol.

Jensen. To gaol!

Pettersen. Or perhaps it was the penitentiary—. (*Listens.*) Sh! they are getting up from table now.

(*The dining-room doors are thrown open by a couple of servants.* Mrs. SÖRBY *comes out, talking to two of the guests. The others follow her by degrees, with the elder* WERLE *amongst them.* HJALMAR, EKDAL *and* GREGERS WERLE *come last.*)

Mrs. Sörby (*to the* SERVANT, *in passing*). We will take coffee in the music-room, Pettersen.

Pettersen. Very good, ma'am.

(Mrs. SÖRBY *and the two gentlemen go into the inner room and out to the right of it.* PETTERSEN *and* JENSEN *follow them.*)

The Flabby Guest (*to the* THIN-HAIRED GUEST). Whew!—it's hard work eating through a dinner like that!

The Thin-haired Guest. Oh, with a little good-will, it's amazing what you can get through in three hours.

The Flabby Guest. Yes, but afterwards, my dear sir, afterwards!

Another Guest. I believe the coffee and liqueurs are to be served in the music-room.

The Flabby Guest. Good! Then perhaps Mrs. Sörby will play us something.

The Thin-haired Guest (*in a low voice*). So long as she doesn't make us dance to a tune we don't like.

The Flabby Guest. Not a bit of it; Bertha would

never go back on her old friends. (*They laugh and go into the inner room*).

Werle (*in a low and depressed voice.*) I don't think anybody noticed it, Gregers.

Gregers (*looking at him*). What?

Werle. Didn't you notice it either?

Gregers. What was there to notice?

Werle. We were thirteen at table.

Gregers. Really? Were we?

Werle (*with a look towards* HJALMAR EKDAL.) We are always accustomed to sit down twelve. (*Turns to the other guests.*) Come along in here, gentlemen. (*He leads the way out through the inner room, and is followed by all the others except* HJALMAR and GREGERS.)

Hjalmar (*who has heard what they were saying*). You shouldn't have invited me, Gregers.

Gregers. What? This party is supposed to be in my honour. Why should I not invite my best and only friend?

Hjalmar. But I don't believe your father likes it. I never come to the house.

Gregers. So I understand. But I wanted to see you and talk to you, because I expect to be going away again directly.—Well, we two old schoolfellows have drifted a long way apart from each other, haven't we? We have not met for sixteen or seventeen years.

Hjalmar. Is it so long?

Gregers. It is indeed. And how is the world treating you? You look well. You have almost become corpulent!

Hjalmar. Well, I should hardly call it corpulent; but probably I look more of a man than I did then.

Gregers. That you do; there is certainly more of your outer man.

Hjalmar (*sadly.*) But the inner man, Gregers! Believe me, there is a vast difference there. You know what a disastrous blow has fallen on me and mine, since we two last met.

Gregers (*lowering his voice.*) How is your father getting on now?

Hjalmar. My dear fellow, don't let us talk about it. My poor unfortunate father lives at home with me, of course. He has not another creature in the world to cling to. But you can understand what torture it is to me to speak about it. Tell me, rather, how you have been getting on up there at the works.

Gregers. It has been splendidly lonely. I have had a fine opportunity to ruminate over all sorts of things. Come here, let us make ourselves more comfortable. (*He sits down in an armchair by the fire and pushes* HJALMAR *into another beside him.*)

Hjalmar (*with feeling*). Anyway, Gregers, I am grateful to you for asking me here; it shows that you no longer bear me any grudge.

Gregers (*astonished*). What should make you think I had any grudge against you?

Hjalmar. Just at first you certainly had.

Gregers. When?

Hjalmar. After that miserable affair happened. And it was perfectly natural that you should, seeing that your own father was within a hair's-breadth of being drawn into this—this terrible business.

Gregers. Was that any reason for my bearing you a grudge? Who put that idea into your head?

Hjalmar. I know you did, Gregers; your father himself told me so.

Gregers (*with a start*). My father! Did he, indeed. Ah!—And so that's why you never let me hear from you—not a single word.

Hjalmar. Yes.

Gregers. Not even when you went and turned yourself into a photographer?

Hjalmar. Your father said I had better not write to you about anything at all.

Gregers (*looking straight in front of him*). Well, perhaps he was right. But tell me now, Hjalmar, are you tolerably content with your present position?

Hjalmar (*with a slight sigh*). Oh yes, oh yes; I may say so, certainly. It was a bit difficult for me at first, as you can understand. It was such an entirely new

life to take up. But then the old life could never have been the same any more. My father's hopeless disaster—the shame and disgrace, Gregers—

Gregers (*feelingly*). Yes, yes—of course, of course.

Hjalmar. It was impossible to think of going on with my studies; we hadn't a shilling left—worse than that, there were debts, most of them owed to your father, I believe—

Gregers. Hm!—

Hjalmar. So that it seemed to me the best thing was to drop the old life and all its associations, once and for all. It was chiefly due to your father's advice that I did so; and as he was so kind in helping me—

Gregers. My father was?

Hjalmar. Surely you know he was? Where do you suppose I could find the money to learn photography and set myself up in a studio? That costs a bit, I can tell you.

Gregers. And did my father pay for all this?

Hjalmar. Yes, my dear fellow, didn't you know that? I understood that he had written to you about it.

Gregers. He never said a word about its being his doing. He must have forgotten. We have never written anything but business letters to each other. So it was really my father—!

Hjalmar. Yes, that it was, indeed. He has never wanted anyone to know anything about it, but it was he. And it was thanks to him, too, that I was able to marry. But perhaps that is news to you too?

Gregers. I knew nothing whatever about it. (*Takes him by the arm.*) I can't tell you, my dear Hjalmar, how glad all this makes me—and how it pains me at the same time. I may have been unjust to my father after all, in some things. It shows at any rate that he has a heart. There is evidence of a conscience about it—

Hjalmar. Of a conscience—?

Gregers. Well, call it what you like. I can't tell you how glad I am to hear this about my father.—And so you are a married man, Hjalmar. It will be a long time

before I shall be able to say that of myself. Well, I hope you are happy in your marriage.

Hjalmar. Very happy. I have as pretty and as capable a wife as a man could wish, and she is by no means without education either.

Gregers (*slightly surprised*). I should hope not!

Hjalmar. Well, life is an education, you see. Her daily companionship with me—and we see a few clever people now and then. I can assure you, you would hardly know it was the same Gina.

Gregers. Gina?

Hjalmar. Yes, don't you remember her name was Gina?

Gregers. What Gina? I don't know—

Hjalmar. Have you forgotten that she had a place in this house once.

Gregers (*glancing at him*). Is it Gina Hansen?

Hjalmar. Of course it is Gina Hansen.

Gregers. Who kept house for us that last year when my mother was ill?

Hjalmar. Certainly. But I thought, my dear fellow, that your father had written to you about my marriage.

Gregers (*rising*). Yes, he did; but not that it was—. (*Walks up and down.*) Yes, wait a bit. I expect he did, now that I think of it. My father always writes me such brief letters. (*Sits down on the arm of* HJALMAR'S *chair.*) Tell me, Hjalmar—it's curious—how did you come to make Gina's—your wife's acquaintance?

Hjalmar. It was quite simple. Gina was not here any longer. Everything was upside down in the house then with your mother's illness; Gina could not put up with it, so she took herself off. That was the year before your mother died—or I daresay it was the same year.

Gregers. It was the same year. I was up at the works then. And after that?

Hjalmar. Well, Gina went home to her mother, a very active and hard-working woman, who kept a small restaurant. And she had a room to let, a very nice, comfortable room—

Gregers. And you were fortunate enough to get it, I suppose?

Hjalmar. Yes, and in fact it was your father who put the idea into my head. And that, you see, was the way I came to know Gina.

Gregers. And it ended in your falling in love?

Hjalmar. Yes. Young people don't take long to fall in love, you know.

Gregers (*rises again and walks about*). Tell me, was it when you were engaged that my father induced you—I mean, was it then that you began to think of taking up photography?

Hjalmar. Certainly. I was so anxious to get some settled occupation, and both your father and I thought photography offered the best chances. And Gina thought so too. Yes, and there was another reason, I must tell you; it turned out that, fortunately, Gina had taken some lessons in retouching photography.

Gregers. It was extraordinarily lucky altogether.

Hjalmar (*in a pleased voice as he rises*). Yes, wasn't it! Don't you think everything happened wonderfully luckily for me?

Gregers. I do, indeed. It looks as if my father had been a sort of providence to you.

Hjalmar (*heartily*). He did not forsake his old friend's son in the day of trouble. He has a heart, you see.

Mrs. Sörby (*coming in on the elder* WERLE'S *arm*). Don't be obstinate, dear Mr. Werle. You must not stay in there any longer staring at all those lights. It is bad for your eyes.

Werle (*slips his arm out of hers and passes his hand over his eyes*). Well, I really believe you are right.

Mrs. Sörby (*to the guests, who are in the other room*). If anyone would like a glass of punch, he must come in here and get it.

The Fat Guest (*coming up to her*). Is it really true that you are determined to deprive us of the sacred right of smoking?

Mrs. Sörby. Yes, it's forbidden in here, in Mr. Werle's sanctum.

The Thin-haired Guest. When did you enact this cruel law about tobacco, Mrs. Sörby?

Mrs. Sörby. After our last dinner, when certain persons allowed themselves to overstep the mark altogether.

The Thin-haired Guest. Mayn't we overstep it just a wee bit?—not the least bit?

Mrs. Sörby. Not the least bit in any direction, Mr. Balle.

(*Most of the* GUESTS *have come in by this time. The* SERVANTS *hand round the punch.*)

Werle (*to* HJALMAR, *who is standing apart by a table*). What are you looking at there, Ekdal?

Hjalmar. I was just looking at an album, Mr. Werle.

The Thin-haired Guest (*who is wandering about the room*). Ah, photographs! They must interest you, of course.

The Fat Guest (*who has settled himself in an arm-chair*). Haven't you brought any of your own with you?

Hjalmar. No, I haven't.

The Fat Guest. You should have; it's an excellent thing for the digestion to sit and look at pictures.

The Thin-haired Guest. And it contributes to the general entertainment, you know.

The Short-sighted Guest. And all contributions are thankfully received.

Mrs. Sörby. They think that when one is asked out to dinner one ought to do something to earn it, Mr. Ekdal!

The Fat Guest. Which is a real pleasure when one gets a good dinner for it.

The Thin-haired Guest. And when it is a case of a struggle for existence, then—.

Mrs. Sörby. You are right there! (*They go on laughing and joking.*)

Gregers (*aside, to* HJALMAR). You must join in, Hjalmar.

Hjalmar (*wincing*). How on earth am I to join in?

The Fat Guest. Don't you think, Mr. Werle, that Tokay may be considered a comparatively wholesome drink?

Werle (*standing by the fire*). I can vouch for the Tokay you had to-day, anyway; it is of one of the very finest years. But I have no doubt you noticed that.

The Fat Guest. Yes, it had a wonderfully delicate flavour.

Hjalmar (*hesitatingly*). Is there a difference between the years then?

The Fat Guest (*laughing*). Well, that's good!

Werle (*with a smile*). It's evidently waste of money to give him a fine wine.

The Thin-haired Guest. Tokay grapes are like photographs, Mr. Ekdal; they need sunshine. Isn't that so?

Hjalmar. Yes, the light is a great point, certainly.

Mrs. Sörby. Then it is just the same with all you gentlemen in official positions; you all like to bask in the sunshine of Court favour.

The Thin-haired Guest. Come, come!—that's a very ancient joke!

The Short-sighted Guest. Mrs. Sörby is coming out!

The Fat Guest. And at our expense. (*Wags his finger.*) Madam Bertha! Madam Bertha!

Mrs. Sörby. Another thing that is true of you, too, is that different years' vintages may differ vastly. The old vintages are the best.

The Short-sighted Guest. Do you reckon me among the old ones?

Mrs. Sörby. Far from it

The Thin-haired Guest. Listen to that! But what about me, dear Mrs. Sörby?

The Fat Guest. Yes, and me! What vintage do you consider us?

Mrs. Sörby. Very sweet years, both of you! (*She puts a glass of punch to her lips; the* GUESTS *continue laughing and joking with her.*)

Werle. Mrs. Sörby can always get neatly out of a difficult position, if she likes. Don't put your glasses down; Pettersen, fill them up!—Gregers, come and have a glass with me. (GREGERS *does not move.*) Won't you join us, Ekdal? I had no opportunity of drinking with you at dinner.

(GRAABERG, *the bookkeeper, peeps into the room through the private door.*)

Graaberg. I beg your pardon, sir, but I can't get out.

Werle. Have you got locked in again?

Graaberg. Yes, and Flagstad has gone off with the keys.

Werle. All right, come out this way.

Graaberg. But I have someone with me—

Werle. Come along, come along, both of you. Don't mind us.

(GRAABERG *and old* EKDAL *come out of the office.* WERLE *gives an involuntary exclamation of disgust; the laughing and joking stops suddenly.* HJALMAR *starts at the sight of his father, puts down his glass and turns towards the fireplace.*)

Ekdal (*keeping his eyes on the ground and bowing awkwardly from side to side as he goes out, mumbling*). Excuse me! Come the wrong way—door's locked—door's locked—Excuse me!

[*Exit at the back, with* GRAABERG.

Werle (*between his teeth*). Confound that Graaberg!

Gregers (*with mouth hanging open and eyes staring, to* HJALMAR). Surely that was never—!

The Fat Guest. What is it? Who was that?

Gregers. Nothing; only the bookkeeper and another man.

The Thin-haired Guest (*to* HJALMAR). Was he a friend of yours?

Hjalmar. I don't know—I didn't notice—

The Fat Guest (*rising*). What the deuce is all this about? (*He joins some of the others, who are talking below their breath.*)

Mrs. Sörby (*whispers to the* SERVANT). Give him something to take away with him—something good.

Petterson (*nodding*). I will. [*Exit.*

Gregers (*in a low and shaking voice, to* HJALMAR). So it was really he?

Hjalmar. Yes.

Gregers. And yet you stood there and said you didn't know him!

Hjalmar (*in a loud whisper*). How could I—

Gregers. Acknowledge your own father?

Hjalmar (*bitterly*). If you were in my place, you would—.

(*The* GUESTS *who have been talking in low tones, now raise their voices with an obvious effort.*)

The Thin-haired Guest (*coming up genially to* HJALMAR *and* GREGERS). Well, I suppose you two are talking over old times at College, eh? Won't you smoke, Mr. Ekdal? Shall I give you a light? Ah, I forgot, we mustn't smoke.

Hjalmar. Thank you, I don't care to.

The Fat Guest. Can't you recite some charming little poem to us, Mr Ekdal? You used to have a great talent for that.

Hjalmar. I am sorry I cannot remember anything.

The Fat Guest. What a pity. Well, what shall we do, Balle? (*The two* GUESTS *go together into the other room.*)

Hjalmar (*sadly*). Gregers, I must go away. When Fate has dealt a man such a blow as it has done to me, you know—. Say good-night to your father from me.

Gregers. Yes, yes. Are you going straight home?

Hjalmar. Yes. Why?

Gregers. Well, perhaps I may come along and see you presently.

Hjalmar. No, you mustn't do that. Don't come to my house. Mine is a sad home, Gregers—especially after a splendid entertainment like this. We can always find some place in the town to meet.

Mrs. Sörby. (*coming up to them, and speaking low*). Are you going, Mr. Ekdal?

Hjalmar. Yes.

Mrs. Sörby. Remember me to Gina.

Hjalmar. Thank you.

Mrs. Sörby. And tell her I shall be up to see her some day soon.

Hjalmar. Yes, thanks. (*To* GREGERS.) Stay here. I will slip out unobserved.

(*He goes out through the other room.*)

Mrs. Sörby (*to the* SERVANT *who has come back*). Well, did you give the old man something to take with him?

Pettersen. Yes, ma'am; I gave him a bottle of brandy.

Mrs. Sörby. Oh, you might have found something better than that to give him.

Pettersen. No indeed, ma'am. Brandy is what he likes best, I know.

The Fat Guest (*standing in the doorway with a piece of music in his hand*). Shall we play a duet, Mrs. Sörby?

Mrs. Sörby. Certainly.

The Guests. Bravo! Bravo! (*They and all the* GUESTS *go out of the room.* GREGERS *remains standing by the fire. His father is looking for something on the writing-table and seems anxious for* GREGERS *to go; as* GREGERS *does not move,* WERLE *goes towards the door.*)

Gregers. Father, will you wait a moment?

Werle (*stopping*). What is it?

Gregers. I want a word with you.

Werle. Can't it wait till we are alone?

Gregers. No, it can't. Perhaps we shall never find ourselves alone.

Werle (*coming nearer him*). What do you mean by that?

(*During the following conversation the sound of the piano is heard faintly from the other room.*)

Gregers. How could you let that family come so miserably to grief?

Werle. You mean the Ekdals, I presume.

Gregers. Yes, I mean the Ekdals. Lieutenant Ekdal and you were once so intimate.

Werle. A great deal too intimate, unfortunately, and I have been paying for it these many years. It is him I have to thank for the fact that my good name and reputation have suffered to some extent too.

Gregers (*in a low voice*). Was he really the only one guilty?

Werle. Who else, if you please!

Gregers. He and you were in partnership over that big purchase of timber—

Werle. But you know that it was Ekdal who made the map of the ground—that misleading map. He was responsible for the illegal felling of timber on Government property. In fact, he was responsible for the whole business. I had no knowledge of what Lieutenant Ekdal was undertaking.

Gregers. Lieutenant Ekdal seems to have had no knowledge himself of what he was undertaking.

Werle. Maybe. But the fact remains that he was found guilty and I was acquitted.

Gregers. Yes, I am quite aware there were no proofs.

Werle. An acquittal is an acquittal. Why are you raking up these horrible old stories, which have whitened my hair before its time? Is this what your mind has been brooding upon up there all these years? I can assure you, Gregers, that here in town the whole story has been forgotten long ago, as far as I am concerned.

Gregers. But what about that wretched family?

Werle. What could you have expected me to do for them? When Ekdal regained his freedom he was a broken man, absolutely past help. There are some men who go under entirely if Fate hits them ever so little, and never come to the surface again. Believe me, Gregers, I could have done no more than I have, without exposing myself to all sorts of suspicion and gossip—

Gregers. Suspicion—? Quite so.

Werle. I got Ekdal copying to do at the office, and I pay him a great deal more for his work than it is worth.

Gregers (*without looking at him*). I have no doubt of that.

Werle. You smile? Perhaps you don't believe it is true? I am quite aware it doesn't appear in my accounts; I never enter such payments as that.

Gregers (*with a cold smile*). I quite agree that there are certain expenses it is better not to enter in one's accounts.

Werle (*with a start*). What do you mean?

Gregers (*in a more confident tone*). Have you entered in your accounts what it cost you to have Hjalmar Ekdal taught photography?

Werle. I? Why should I have entered that?

Gregers. I know now that it was you who paid for it. And I know, too, that it was you who made it possible for him to settle down as he has done.

Werle. And, after all that, you say I have done nothing for the Ekdals! I can assure you that family has caused me enough expense, in all conscience.

Gregers. Have you entered any one item of it in your accounts?

Werle. Why do you ask that?

Gregers. I have my reasons. Tell me this—didn't your great solicitude for your old friend's son begin just at the time he was contemplating getting married?

Werle. Good Lord!—after all these years, how can I—?

Gregers. You wrote to me at the time—a business letter, naturally—and in a postscript, in just one or two words, you told me Hjalmar Ekdal had married a Miss Hansen.

Werle. Well, that was true; that was her name.

Gregers. But you never mentioned the fact that this Miss Hansen was Gina Hansen, our former housekeeper.

Werle (*laughs ironically, but in a constrained manner*). No, I didn't suppose you were so specially interested in our former housekeeper.

Gregers. Nor was I. But (*lowering his voice*) there was someone else in this house who *was* specially interested in her.

Werle. What do you mean? (*In an angry voice.*) You don't mean that you refer to me?

Gregers (*in a low voice, but firmly*). Yes, I refer to you.

Werle. And you dare—! You have the audacity to—! And as for this ungrateful photographer fellow—how dare he presume to come here and make such accusations!

Gregers. Hjalmar has never said a single word of the kind. I don't believe that he has even a suspicion of anything of the sort.

Werle. Then where have you got it from? Who could have told you such a thing?

Gregers. My poor unhappy mother told me, the last time I saw her.

Werle. Your mother! I might have thought as much! She and you were always together in everything. It was she from the very first who drew you apart from me.

Gregers. No, it was the suffering and humiliation she had to undergo, till at last it broke her down and drove her to such a miserable end.

Werle. She had not the least suffering or humiliation to undergo—not more than many others, anyway! But there is no dealing with sickly and hysterical folk. I have good reason to know that. And so you have been brooding over such a suspicion as this!—you have been raking up all sorts of ancient rumours and slanders about your own father!—Let me tell you, Gregers, I really think at your age you might find something more useful to do.

Gregers. Yes, I think it is quite time I did.

Werle. And perhaps, if you did, you would be easier in your mind than you appear to be at present. What possible point is there in your drudging away at the works, year in and year out, like the merest clerk, and refusing to accept a shilling more than the ordinary wages? It is simply folly on your part.

Gregers. Ah, if only I were as certain of that as you are!

Werle. I think I understand. You want to be independent, not to be under the slightest obligation to me. Well, now there happens to be an opportunity for you to become independent, to be your own master entirely.

Gregers. Indeed? and what may that be?

Werle. When I wrote to you that I had urgent reasons for asking you to come to town at once—well—

Gregers. Well, what is it exactly that you want? I have been waiting all day for you to tell me.

Werle. I propose to offer you a partnership in the firm.

Gregers. I!—a partner in your firm?

Werle. Yes. It need not necessitate our always

being together. You might manage the business here in town, and I would go up to the works.

Gregers. You?

Werle. Yes. You see, I am no longer as fit for my work as I used to be. I am obliged to be careful of my eyes, Gregers; they have begun to get a bit weak.

Gregers. They were always that.

Werle. Not as weak as they are now. And, besides that, circumstances might make it desirable for me to live up there, at any rate for a while.

Gregers. Such an idea has never entered into my mind.

Werle. Listen, Gregers; we seem to stand apart from each other in very many ways, but after all we are father and son. It seems to me we ought to be able to come to some kind of an understanding with one another.

Gregers. To outward appearance, I suppose you mean?

Werle. Well, at any rate that would be something. Think over it, Gregers. Doesn't it appear to you as a possibility? Eh?

Gregers (*looking at him coldly*). There is something at the bottom of all this.

Werle. What do you mean?

Gregers. You probably intend to make use of me in some way.

Werle. Two people as closely connected as we are can always be of use to one another.

Gregers. Possibly.

Werle. I want you to stay at home with me for a bit. I am a lonely man, Gregers; I have always felt lonely, all my life, and I feel it more than ever now that I am no longer young. I need some companionship.

Gregers. You have Mrs. Sörby.

Werle. Yes, that is true; and she has, to tell you the truth, become almost indispensable to me. She is clever and easy-going, and livens up the house—and I need that sort of thing badly.

Gregers. Quite so; you seem to me to have just what you want.

Werle. Yes, but I am afraid it can't last. Under such circumstances a woman is easily put into a false

position in the eyes of the world. Indeed, one might almost say that the man is not much safer.

Gregers. Oh, when a man gives such good dinners as you do, he can take considerable liberties with public opinion.

Werle. Yes, but what about her, Gregers? I am so afraid she won't put up with it any longer. And even if she did—if out of attachment to me she were to disregard gossip and scandal, and so on—? You have a very strong sense of justice, Gregers; doesn't it seem to you that—

Gregers (*interrupting him*). Tell me this, without beating about the bush; are you thinking of marrying her?

Werle. And if I were, what then?

Gregers. Exactly. What then?

Werle. Would it be a thing you would find it impossible to countenance?

Gregers. Not in the least. Not by any means.

Werle. Well, I was not sure whether perhaps, out of respect for your mother's memory, you—

Gregers. I am not sentimental.

Werle. Well, whether you are or not, you have at any rate lifted a heavy weight off my mind. It is an immense pleasure to me that I can count on your sympathy in this matter.

Gregers (*looking intently at him*). Now I understand how it is you want to make use of me.

Werle. Make use of you? What an expression!

Gregers. Oh, don't let us be so nice in our choice of words—at any rate when we are alone. (*With a short laugh.*) I see! This was the reason why it was absolutely necessary for me to come to town—to help you to make a pretence of family life here for Mrs. Sörby's edification!—a touching tableau, father and son! That would be something new.

Werle. How dare you take that tone with me!

Gregers. When was there any family life here? Never, as long as I can remember. But now, if you please, a little of that sort of thing is desirable. It would

undeniably have a splendid effect if it could get about that the son has hastened home, on the wings of filial piety, to attend his old father's wedding. What becomes then of all the rumours of what his poor dead mother had suffered and endured? They are absolutely silenced; her son's action would do that.

Werle. Gregers—I don't believe there is anyone living towards whom you feel as bitterly as you do to me.

Gregers (*in a low voice*). I have seen you at too close quarters.

Werle. You have seen me through your mother's eyes. (*Lowering his voice a little.*) But you ought to remember that her eyes were—were—clouded now and then.

Gregers (*trembling*). I understand what you mean. But who is to blame for my mother's unfortunate weakness? You, and all your—! The last of them was this woman that was foisted upon Hjalmar Ekdal when you were tired of her. Faugh!

Werle (*shrugging his shoulders*). Just the way your mother used to talk.

Gregers (*without paying any attention to him*). And there he is now, like a big unsuspecting child, in the middle of all this deceit; living under the same roof with a woman like that, without the slightest idea that what he calls his home is built on a lie. (*Taking a step nearer his father.*) When I look back on all you have done, it is like looking at a battle-field strewn on every side with ruined lives.

Werle. I am beginning to think the gulf between us two is too wide to be bridged.

Gregers (*controls himself and bows*). I agree with you; and therefore I will take my hat and go.

Werle. Go? Out of the house?

Gregers. Yes, I see at last some object to live for.

Werle. What may that be?

Gregers. You would only laugh, if I told you.

Werle. A lonely man doesn't laugh so readily, Gregers.

Gregers (*pointing to the back of the room*). Look, father—Mrs. Sörby is playing blind man's buff with your guests. Good-night, and good-bye. (*He goes out.*

The GUESTS *are heard merrily laughing as they come into the other room.*)

Werle (*muttering scornfully after* GREGERS). Ha! Ha! Poor chap—and he says he is not sentimental!

ACT II

(SCENE.—HJALMAR EKDAL'S *studio, a fairly large attic room. On the right, a sloping roof with large glass windows, half covered by a blue curtain. The door leading into the room is in the right-hand corner, and further forward on the same side is a door leading to a sitting-room. In the left-hand wall are two doors, with a stove between them. In the back wall are wide double doors, arranged so as to slide back on either side. The studio is simply but comfortably furnished. Between the doors on the right, near the wall, stands a sofa with a table and some chairs; on the table a shaded lamp is lit. An old armchair is drawn up by the stove. Photographic apparatus and instruments are scattered here and there about the room. Against the back wall, to the left of the double doors, is a bookcase, containing some books, boxes, bottles of chemicals, and a variety of instruments and tools. On the table are lying photographs, paint-brushes, paper, and so forth.* GINA EKDAL *is sitting on a chair by the table, sewing.* HEDVIG *is on the sofa reading a book, with her thumbs in her ears and her hands shading her eyes.*)

Gina (*who has glanced several times at* HEDVIG *with restrained anxiety, calls to her*). Hedvig! (HEDVIG *does not hear her.*)

Gina (*louder*). Hedvig!

Hedvig (*puts her hands down and looks up*). Yes, mother?

Gina. Hedvig, you must be good and not sit there reading any longer.

Hedvig. Mayn't I read a little more, mother? Just a little?

Gina. No, no, you must put your book away. Your

father doesn't like it; he don't ever read in the evening himself.

Hedvig (*shutting her book*). No, father doesn't care so much about reading.

Gina (*puts down her sewing and takes up a pencil and a little note-book*). Do you remember how much we paid for the butter to-day?

Hedvig. One and ninepence.

Gina. That's right. (*Writes it down.*) It's frightful, the amount of butter we get through in this house. And then there was the smoked sausage and the cheese—let me see—(*writes*)—and then there was the ham—(*adds up*)—there, that lot alone comes to—

Hedvig. And then there's the beer.

Gina. Yes, of course. (*Puts it down.*) It soon mounts up, but it can't be helped.

Hedvig. But then you and I didn't need anything hot for dinner, as father was out.

Gina. No, that was lucky. And, what's more, I have taken eight and sixpence for photographs.

Hedvig. As much as that!

Gina. Yes, eight and sixpence exactly.

(*Silence.* GINA *resumes her sewing.* HEDVIG *takes a piece of paper and a pencil and begins drawing, shading her eyes with her left hand.*)

Hedvig. Isn't it funny to think of father at a big dinner-party at Mr. Werle's?

Gina. He is not strictly speaking, Mr. Werle's guest, it was the son who invited him. (*After a pause.*) We have nothing to do with Mr. Werle.

Hedvig. I wish most awfully he would come home. He promised to ask Mrs. Sörby for something nice to bring back to me.

Gina. Ah, there's plenty of good things going in that house, I can tell you.

Hedvig (*resuming her drawing*). And I believe I am a bit hungry too.

(*Old* EKDAL *comes in, a roll of papers under his arm and a parcel sticking out of his pocket.*)

Gina. How late you are to-night, grandfather—

Ekdal. They had locked up the office. I had to wait for Graaberg; and then I was obliged to go through —hm!

Hedvig. Did they give you some more copying, grandfather?

Ekdal. All this lot. Just look!

Gina. That's splendid.

Hedvig. And you have got a parcel in your pocket, too.

Ekdal. Have I? Oh, that's nothing, that's nothing. (*Puts down his stick in a corner of the room.*) This will keep me busy for a long time, Gina. (*Pulls one of the sliding doors at the back a little open*) Hush! (*He looks in through the door for a moment and then shuts it again carefully.*) Ha, ha! They are all asleep together in there. And she has gone into the basket of her own accord. Ha, ha!

Hedvig. Are you quite sure she isn't cold in the basket, grandfather?

Ekdal. What an idea! Cold? In all that straw? (*Goes to the farther door on the left.*) Are there matches here?

Gina. There's some on the chest of drawers. (EKDAL *goes into his room.*)

Hedvig. Isn't it nice that grandfather has got all this fresh copying to do!

Gina. Yes, poor old grandfather; he will be able to make a little pocket-money.

Hedvig. And won't be able to sit all the morning at that horrid restaurant of Mrs. Eriksen's over there.

Gina. Yes, that's another thing.

Hedvig (*after a short pause*). Do you think they are still at dinner?

Gina. Goodness knows. Very likely they are.

Hedvig. Just think what a lovely dinner father must be having. I know he will be in such a good temper when he comes home. Don't you think so, mother?

Gina. Yes, but just think how nice it would be if we could tell him we had let the room.

Hedvig. We don't need that to-night.

Gina. Oh, every little helps. And the room is standing empty.

Hedvig. I mean that we don't need to be able to tell him that to-night. He will be in good spirits anyway. We shall be all the better of the news about the room for another time.

Gina (*looking at her*). Do you like having some good news to tell your father when he comes home of an evening?

Hedvig. Yes, because things seem to go pleasanter then.

Gina (*thoughtfully*). There's something in that, certainly.

(*Old* EKDAL *comes in again, and is going out by the nearer door on the left.*)

Gina (*turning in her chair*). Do you want something in the kitchen, grandfather?

Ekdal. Yes, I do. Don't get up. [*Exit.*

Gina. I hope he is not poking the fire, in there. (*After a short pause.*) Hedvig, do see what he is up to.

(*Ekdal returns with a little jug of hot water.*)

Hedvig. Have you been getting some hot water, grandfather?

Ekdal. Yes, I have. I want it for something—I have got some writing to do, and my ink is all dried up as thick as porridge—hm!

Gina. But you ought to have your supper first. It is all laid in there.

Ekdal. I can't bother about supper, Gina. I'm dreadfully busy, I tell you. I won't have anyone coming into my room, not anyone—hm! (*Goes into his room.* GINA *and* HEDVIG *exchange glances*).

Gina (*in a low voice*). Can you imagine where he has got the money from?

Hedvig. I expect he has got it from Graaberg.

Gina. Not a bit of it. Graaberg always sends his pay to me.

Hedvig. Then he must have got a bottle on credit somewhere.

Gina. Poor grandfather, no one would give him credit.

(*Enter* HJALMAR EKDAL, *wearing an overcoat and a grey felt hat*).

Gina (*throws down her sewing and gets up*). Back already, Hjalmar?

Hedvig (*at the same time, jumping up*). Fancy your coming now, father!

Hjalmar (*taking off his hat*). Oh, most of the guests were leaving.

Hedvig. So early?

Hjalmar. Yes, it was a dinner-party, you know. (*Begins taking off his coat*).

Gina. Let me help you.

Hedvig. And me too. (*They take off his coat, Gina hangs it on the wall.*) Were there many there, father?

Hjalmar. Oh no, not many. We were just twelve or fourteen at table.

Gina. And you had a chat with all of them?

Hjalmar. A little, yes; but Gregers practically monopolised me.

Gina. Is Gregers as ugly as ever?

Hjalmar. Well, he's not particularly handsome. Isn't the old man in yet?

Hedvig. Yes, grandfather is busy writing.

Hjalmar. Did he say anything?

Gina. No, what about?

Hjalmar. Didn't he say anything about—. I fancied I heard he had been to Graaberg. I will go in and see him for a moment.

Gina. No, no, it's not worth while.

Hjalmar. Why not? Did he say he didn't want me to go in?

Gina. He doesn't want anyone to go in to-night

Hedvig (*making signs to her*). Hm—hm!

Gina (*taking no notice*). He came in and fetched himself some hot water.

Hjalmar. Then I suppose he is—?

Gina. Yes, that's it.

Hjalmar. Good heavens—my poor old grey-haired

father! Well, anyway, let him have what little pleasure he can. (*Old* EKDAL *comes out of his room wearing a dressing-gown and smoking a pipe.*)

Ekdal. Ah, you are back. I thought I heard your voice.

Hjalmar. I have just come in.

Ekdal. You didn't see me, then?

Hjalmar. No, but they told me you had gone through—and so I thought I would come after you.

Ekdal. Nice of you, Hjalmar—hm! What were all those people?

Hjalmar. Oh, all sorts. Flor was there, and Balle, and Kaspersen, and what's-his-name—I don't remember—all of them men about the Court, you know.

Ekdal (*nodding*). Do you hear that, Gina? All of 'em men about the Court!

Gina. Yes, they are very fine in that house now.

Hedvig. Did any of them sing, father—or recite?

Hjalmar. No, they only talked nonsense. They wanted me to recite to them, but I wasn't going to do that.

Ekdal. You weren't going to do that, eh?

Gina. I think you might have done that.

Hjalmar. No, I don't think one ought to be at everyone's beck and call. (*Walking up and down.*) Anyway, I am not going to be.

Ekdal. No, no, Hjalmar's not that sort.

Hjalmar. I fail to see why I should be expected to amuse others if I happen to go out for once. Let the others exert themselves a little. These fellows go from one house to another, eating and drinking, every day of their lives. I think they should take the trouble to do something in return for all the excellent meals they get.

Gina. But you didn't tell them that?

Hjalmar (*humming*). Hm—hm—hm; they heard something that astonished them, I can tell you.

Ekdal. And all 'em men about the Court!

Hjalmar. That didn't save them. (*Casually.*) And then we had a little argument about Tokay.

Ekdal. Tokay, did you say? That's a grand wine, if you like!

Hjalmar. It *can* be a grand wine. But of course, you know, all vintages are not of the same quality; it entirely depends how much sunshine the vines have had.

Gina. There isn't anything you don't know, Hjalmar.

Ekdal. And did they want to argue about that?

Hjalmar. They tried to; but they were informed that it was just the same with Court officials. All years are not equally good in their case either, they were told.

Gina. I don't know how you think of such things!

Ekdal. Ha—ha! They had to put that in their pipes and smoke it?

Hjalmar. We let them have it straight between the eyes.

Ekdal. Do you hear that, Gina? Straight between the eyes!—and men about the Court too!

Gina. Fancy that, straight between the eyes.

Hjalmar. Yes, but I don't want you to talk about it. One doesn't repeat such things as that. The whole thing passed off quite amicably, of course. They were very genial, pleasant fellows. Why should I want to hurt their feelings? Not I.

Ekdal. But straight between the eyes—

Hedvig (*coaxingly.*) How funny it is to see you in dress clothes. You look very nice in dress clothes, father.

Hjalmar. Yes, don't you think so? And this really fits me beautifully. It looks almost as if it had been made for me—a little tight in the armholes, perhaps—help me, Hedvig. (*Takes off the coat.*) I would rather put on my jacket. Where have you put my jacket, Gina?

Gina. Here it is. (*Brings the jacket and helps him on with it.*)

Hjalmar. That's better! Be sure you don't forget to let Molvik have the suit back to-morrow morning.

Gina (*folding it up*). I will see to it.

Hjalmar (*stretching himself*). Ah, that's more comfortable. And I rather fancy a loose, easy coat like this suits my style better. Don't you think so, Hedvig?

Hedvig. Yes, father.

Hjalmar. Especially if I tie my cravat with flowing ends, like this—what do you think?

Hedvig. Yes, it goes so well with your beard and your thick curly hair.

Hjalmar. I don't know that I should call it curly; I should think "wavy" was a better word.

Hedvig. Yes, it has beautiful waves in it.

Hjalmar. That's it—wavy.

Hedvig (*after a little pause, pulling his coat*). Father!

Hjalmar. Well, what is it?

Hedvig. You know quite well.

Hjalmar. No, indeed I don't.

Hedvig (*half laughing and half crying*). Father, you mustn't tease me any longer.

Hjalmar. But what is it?

Hedvig (*shaking him*). Don't pretend! Out with them, father—the good things you promised to bring home to me.

Hjalmar. There, just fancy my having forgotten all about it!

Hedvig. No, you are only making fun of me, father! It's too bad. Where have you hidden it?

Hjalmar. Upon my word, I forgot all about it! But wait a bit, Hedvig, I have got something else for you. (*Rises, and hunts in the pockets of the dress coat.*)

Hedvig (*jumping and clapping her hands.*) Oh, mother! mother!

Gina. You see, if you only give him time—

Hjalmar (*holding out a bit of paper*). Look, here it is.

Hedvig. That! It is only a piece of paper.

Hjalmar. It is the bill of fare, my dear—the whole bill of fare. Here is "Menu" at the top, that means the bill of fare.

Hedvig. Is that all you have got?

Hjalmar. I forgot to bring anything else, I tell you. But I can tell you all these good things were a great treat. Sit down at the table now and read the list, and

I will describe the taste of all the dishes to you. Look, Hedvig.

Hedvig (*gulping down her tears*). Thank you. (*She sits down, but does not read it.* GINA *makes signs to her, and* HJALMAR *notices it.*)

Hjalmar (*walking up and down*). It is incredible what the father of a family is expected to be able to think about; and if he forgets the slightest little thing, he is sure to see glum faces at once. Well, one gets accustomed even to that. (*Stands by the stove beside his father.*) Have you taken a peep in there this evening, father?

Ekdal. Of course I have. She has gone into the basket.

Hjalmar. Has she gone into the basket? She is beginning to get accustomed to it, then.

Ekdal. Yes, I told you she would. But, you know, there are some little matters—

Hjalmar. Little improvements, eh?

Ekdal. Yes, but we must see to them.

Hjalmar. Very well, let us talk over these improvements, father. Come and sit on the sofa.

Ekdal. Quite so. But I think I will just attend to my pipe first—it wants cleaning. Hm! (*Goes into his room.*)

Gina (*smiling at* HJALMAR). Clean his pipe!

Hjalmar. Come, come, Gina—let him be. Poor, broken-down old fellow. Yes, these improvements—we had better get them off our hands to-morrow.

Gina. You won't have time to-morrow, Ekdal.

Hedvig (*interrupting*). Oh yes, he will, mother!

Gina. Remember those prints that have got to be retouched. They have asked for them over and over again.

Hjalmar. Bless my soul, those prints again! I'll finish those off easily enough. Are there any new orders?

Gina. No, worse luck. There are only the two appointments you booked for to-morrow.

Hjalmar. Nothing else? Well, of course, if people won't exert themselves—

Gina. But what am I to do? I am sure I advertise as much as I can.

Hjalmar. Yes, you advertise!—and you see how much good it does. I suppose nobody has been to look at the room either?

Gina. Not yet.

Hjalmar. What else could you expect? If people won't keep their wits about them—. You really must pull yourself together, Gina.

Hedvig (*coming forward*). Shall I get you your flute, father?

Hjalmar. No, no; I have no room for pleasures in my life. (*Walking about.*) Work, work—I will show you what work means to-morrow, you may be sure of that. I shall go on working as long as my strength holds out—

Gina. My dear Hjalmar, I didn't mean you to take me up that way.

Hedvig. Wouldn't you like me to bring you a bottle of beer, father?

Hjalmar. Certainly not, I don't want anything. (*Stops suddenly.*) Beer?—did you say beer?

Hedvig (*briskly*). Yes, father; lovely cool beer.

Hjalmar. Well, if you insist on it, I don't mind if you bring me a bottle.

Gina. Yes, do, Hedvig; then we shall feel cosy.

(HEDVIG *runs towards the kitchen.* HJALMAR, *who is standing by the stove, stops her, looks at her, and draws her towards him.*)

Hjalmar. My little Hedvig!

Hedvig (*with tears of joy in her eyes*). Dear, kind father!

Hjalmar. No, you mustn't call me that. There was I, sitting at the rich man's table, enjoying myself—sitting there filling myself with all his good things—. I might at least have remembered—!

Gina (*sitting down at the table*). Don't be absurd, Hjalmar.

Hjalmar. It's true. But you mustn't think too much of that. You know, anyway, how much I love you.

Hedvig (*throwing her arms round him*). And we love you so awfully, father!

Hjalmar. And if sometimes I am unreasonable with you, you will remember—won't you—that I am a man beset by a host of cares. There, there! (*Wipes his eyes.*) No beer at such a moment as this. Give me my flute. (HEDVIG *runs to the bookcase and gets it for him.*) Thank you. That's better. With my flute in my hand, and you two beside me—! (HEDVIG *sits down at the table beside* GINA. HJALMAR *walks up and down, then resolutely begins playing a Bohemian country-dance, but in very slow time and very sentimentally. He soon stops, stretches out his left hand to* GINA *and says in a voice full of emotion.*) No matter if we have to live poorly and frugally, Gina — this is our home; and I will say this, that it is good to be at home again. (*He resumes his playing; shortly afterwards a knock is heard at the door.*)

Gina (*getting up*). Hush, Hjalmar—I think there is someone at the door.

Hjalmar (*laying down his flute*). Of course!

(GINA *goes and opens the door*).

Gregers Werle (*speaking outside the door*). I beg your pardon—

Gina (*retreating a little*). Ah!

Gregers (*outside*). Is this where Mr. Ekdal the photographer lives?

Gina. Yes, it is.

Hjalmar (*going to the door*). Gregers! Is it you after all? Come in, come in.

Gregers (*coming in*). I told you I would come up and see you?

Hjalmar. But to-night—? Have you left all your guests.

Gregers. I have left my guests and my home. Good-evening, Mrs. Ekdal. I don't suppose you recognise me?

Gina. Of course I do; you are not so difficult to recognise, Mr. Werle.

Gregers. I suppose not; I am like my mother, and no doubt you remember her a little.

Hjalmar. Did you say that you had left your home.

Gregers. Yes, I have gone to an hotel.

Hjalmar. Indeed? Well, as you are here, take off your things and sit down.

Gregers Thank you. (*He takes off his coat. He has changed his clothes, and is dressed in a plain grey suit of provincial cut.*)

Hjalmar. Sit down here on the sofa. Make yourself at home.

(GREGERS *sits on the sofa and* HJALMAR *on the chair by the table.*)

Gregers (*looking round him*). So this is where you live, Hjalmar. Do you work here too?

Hjalmar. This is the studio, as you can see—

Gina. It is our largest room, and so we prefer sitting in here.

Hjalmar. We used to live in better quarters, but these have one great advantage, there is such a splendid amount of space—

Gina. And we have a room on the other side of the passage, which we can let.

Gregers (*to* HJALMAR). Ah!—have you any lodgers?

Hjalmar. No, not yet. It is not so easy, you know; one has to make an effort to get them. (*To* HEDVIG.) What about that beer? (HEDVIG *nods and goes into the kitchen.*)

Gregers. Is that your daughter?

Hjalmar. Yes, that is Hedvig.

Gregers. Your only child?

Hjalmar. Our only child, yes. She is the source of our greatest happiness and—(*lowering his voice*) also of our keenest sorrow.

Gregers. What do you mean?

Hjalmar. She is dangerously threatened with the loss of her sight.

Gregers. Going blind!

Hjalmar. Yes. There are only the first symptoms of it at present, and all may go well for some time yet. But the doctor has warned us. It is inevitable.

Gregers. What a terrible misfortune! What is the cause of it?

Hjalmar (*sighing*). It is hereditary, apparently.

Gregers (*starting*). Hereditary?

Gina. Hjalmar's mother had weak eyes too.

Hjalmar. Yes, so my father tells me; I can't remember her, you know.

Gregers. Poor child. And how does she take it.

Hjalmar. Oh well, you will understand that we have not had the heart to tell her anything about it. She suspects nothing. She is as happy and careless as a bird, singing about the house, and so she is flitting through her life into the blackness that awaits her. (*Despairingly.*) It is terribly hard for me, Gregers.

(HEDVIG *comes in, bringing a tray with beer and glasses, and set it down on the table.*)

Hjalmar (*stroking her hair.*) Thank you, dear, thank you. (HEDVIG *put her arms round his neck and whispers in his ear.*) No—no bread and butter, thanks—unless perhaps you would take some, Gregers?

Gregers (*shaking his head*). No, thanks.

Hjalmar (*still speaking in a melancholy tone*). Well, you may as well bring in a little, all the same. If you have a crusty piece, I should prefer it—and be sure to see that there is enough butter on it. (HEDVIG *nods happily and goes into the kitchen again.*)

Gregers (*who has followed her with his eyes*). She seems well and strong in other respects.

Gina. Yes, thank heaven, she is quite well in every other way.

Gregers. She looks as if she will be like you when she grows up, Mrs. Ekdal. How old is she now?

Gina. Hedvig is just fourteen; her birthday is the day after to-morrow.

Gregers. She is tall for her age.

Gina. Yes, she has grown a lot this last year.

Gregers. These young people growing up make us realise our own age. How long have you been married now?

Gina. We have been married—let me see—just fifteen years.

Gregers. Can it be so long as that!

Gina (*looks at him watchfully*). It is indeed.

Hjalmar. Yes, that it is. Fifteen years all but a few months. (*Changes the subject.*) They must have seemed long years to you up at the works, Gregers.

Gregers. They did seem so while I was getting through them; but now, looking back on them, I can scarcely believe it is all that time.

(*Old* EKDAL *comes in from his room, without his pipe, and wearing his old military cap. He walks a little unsteadily.*)

Ekdal. Now then, Hjalmar, we can sit down and talk over those—hm! What is it—what is it?

Hjalmar (*going towards him*). Father, someone is here—Gregers Werle. I don't know whether you remember him?

Ekdal (*looking at* GREGERS, *who has risen*). Werle? Do you mean the son? What does he want with me?

Hjalmar. Nothing; it is me he has come to see.

Ekdal. Oh, then there is nothing the matter?

Hjalmar. No, of course not.

Ekdal (*swinging his arms*). I don't mind, you know; I am not afraid, but—

Gregers (*going up to him*). I only want to bring you a greeting from your old hunting-ground, Lieutenant Ekdal.

Ekdal. My hunting-ground?

Gregers. Yes, from up there round the Höidal works.

Ekdal. Ah, up there. I was well known up there once.

Gregers. You were a mighty hunter in those days.

Ekdal. Ah, that I was, I believe you. You are looking at my cap. I need ask no one's leave to wear it here indoors. So long as I don't go into the streets with it on—

(HEDVIG *brings in a plate of bread and butter, and puts it on the table.*)

Hjalmar. Sit down, father, and have a glass of beer. Help yourself, Gregers.

(EKDAL *totters over to the sofa, mumbling.* GREGERS *sits down on a chair beside him.* HJALMAR *sits on the other side of* GREGERS. GINA *sits a little way from the table and sews;* HEDVIG *stands beside her* FATHER.

Gregers. Do you remember, Lieutenant Ekdal, how Hjalmar and I used to come up and see you in the summer-time and at Christmas?

Ekdal. Did you? No—no—I don't remember that. But I can tell you I was a fine sportsman in those days. I have shot bears, too—nine of 'em, I have shot.

Gregers (*looking at him sympathetically*). And now you get no more shooting.

Ekdal. Oh, I don't know about that. I get some sport still now and then. Not that sort of sport, of course. In the forests, you know—the forests, the forests—! (*Drinks.*) Are the forests looking fine up there now?

Gregers. Not so fine as in your day. A lot of them have been cut down.

Ekdal (*lowering his voice, as if afraid*). That's a dangerous thing to do. That brings trouble. The forests avenge themselves.

Hjalmar (*filling his* FATHER'S *glass*). Now, father—a little more.

Gregers. How can a man like you, who were always accustomed to be in the open, live in a stuffy town, boxed in by four walls like this?

Ekdal (*looking at* HJALMAR *with a quiet smile*). Oh, it is not so bad here, not at all so bad.

Gregers. But think of all you were always accustomed to—the cool, refreshing breezes, the free life in the woods and on the moors, among the beasts and birds—

Ekdal (*smiling*). Hjalmar, shall we show it to him?

Hjalmar (*hastily and with some embarrassment*). No, no, father—not to-night.

Gregers. What does he want to show me?

Hjalmar. Oh, it is only a sort of—. You can see it some other time.

Gregers (*continues talking to* EKDAL). What I had in my mind, Lieutenant Ekdal, was that you should come back up to the works with me; I am going back there very soon. You could easily get some copying to do up there too; and here you haven't a single thing to give you pleasure or to amuse you.

Ekdal (*staring at him in amazement*). I haven't a single thing to—!

Gregers. Well, of course, you have Hjalmar; but then he has his own family ties. But a man like you, who has always felt so strongly the call of a free, unfettered life—

Ekdal (*striking the table*). Hjalmar, he *shall* see it!

Hjalmar. But, father, is it worth while now? It is dark, you know.

Ekdal. Nonsense, there is moonlight. (*Gets up.*) He *shall* see it, I say. Let me pass—and you come and help me, Hjalmar.

Hedvig. Yes, do, father!

Hjalmar (*getting up*). Very well.

Gregers (*to* GINA). What does he want me to see.

Gina. Oh, you mustn't expect to see anything very wonderful.

(EKDAL *and* HJALMAR *have gone to the back of the stage, and each of them pushes back one side of the sliding doors.* HEDVIG *helps the old man;* GREGERS *remains standing by the sofa;* GINA *sits quietly sewing. The open doors disclose a large, irregularly-shaped attic, full of recesses and with two stove-pipes running up through it. Through the little roof-windows the bright moonlight is pouring in upon certain spots in the attic; the rest of it is in deep shadow.*)

Ekdal (*to* GREGERS). Come close and have a look.

Gregers (*going to him*). What is there for me to see?

Ekdal. Come and take a good look. Hm!

Hjalmar (*in a slightly constrained tone*). This is all my father's, you know.

Gregers (*comes to the door and looks into the attic*). You keep poultry then, Lieutenant Ekdal!

Ekdal. I should think we did keep poultry. They are roosting now; but you should just see them in the daytime!

Hedvig. And we have got a—

Ekdal. Hush! Hush! Don't say anything yet.

Gregers. You have got pigeons too, I see.

Ekdal. Yes, I shouldn't wonder if we had got pigeons too! They have nesting-boxes up there under the eaves, you see; pigeons like to roost well above ground, you know.

Gregers. They are not common pigeons, though.

Ekdal. Common pigeons! No, I should think not! We have got tumblers, and a pair of pouters too. But come and look here! Can you see that hutch over there against the wall?

Gregers. Yes, what is it for?

Ekdal. That's where the rabbits sleep at night.

Gregers. What, have you got rabbits too?

Ekdal. Yes, you bet we have rabbits! He is asking if we have got rabbits, Hjalmar! Hm! But now I will show you the great sight! Now you shall see it! Get out of the way, Hedvig. Just stand here; that's it; now look in there. Don't you see a basket with straw in it?

Gregers. Yes. And I can see a bird lying in the basket.

Ekdal. Hm!—a bird!

Gregers. Isn't it a duck?

Hjalmar. But what kind of a duck, should you say?

Hedvig. It isn't an ordinary duck.

Ekdal. Sh!

Gregers. It isn't a foreign bird either.

Ekdal. No, Mr.—Werle, that is no foreign bird, because it is a wild duck.

Gregers. No! is it really? A wild duck?

Ekdal. Yes, that it is. The "bird," as you call it, is a wild duck. That's our wild duck.

Hedvig. My wild duck. It belongs to me.

Gregers. Is it possible it can live up here in the attic? Does it do well?

Ekdal. Of course it has a trough of water to splash about in.

Hjalmar. And gets fresh water every other day.

Gina (*turning to* HJALMAR). Hjalmar, dear, it is getting icy cold in here, you know.

Ekdal. Hm! we will shut it up then. We mustn't disturb their night's rest. Catch hold, Hedvig. (HJALMAR *and* HEDVIG *push the doors together.*) Some other time you shall see it properly. (*Sits down in the armchair by the stove.*) They are most remarkable birds, wild ducks, I can tell you.

Gregers. But how did you manage to capture it?

Ekdal. I didn't capture it. It is a certain person in the town here, that we have to thank for it.

Gregers (*with a slight start*). I suppose that man is not my father, by any chance?

Ekdal. You have hit it. Your father and no one else. Hm!

Hjalmar. It is funny you should guess that, Gregers.

Gregers. You told me you were indebted to my father for so many different things; so I thought very likely—

Gina. But we didn't get the duck from Mr. Werle himself—

Ekdal. It is Haakon Werle we have to thank for it all the same, Gina. (*To* GREGERS). He was out in a boat you see, and shot it. But your father's sight isn't good, you know, and it was only wounded.

Gregers. I see, it was only slightly hit.

Hjalmar. Yes, only in two or three places.

Hedvig. It was hit in the wing, so it couldn't fly.

Gregers. I see; then I suppose it dived down to the bottom?

Ekdal (*sleepily in a thick voice*). Naturally. Wild duck always do that. They stick down at the bottom—as deep as they can get—bite fast hold of the weed and wrack and all the rubbish that is down there. And so they never come up again.

Gregers. But, Lieutenant Ekdal, your wild duck came up again.

Ekdal. He had an extraordinarily clever dog, your father. And the dog—it dived after it and hauled it up again.

Gregers (*turning to* HJALMAR). And then you got it?

Hjalmar. Not directly. It was brought to your father's house first, but it didn't thrive there; so Pettersen asked leave to kill it—

Ekdal (*half asleep*). Hm!—Pettersen — yes — old codfish!—

Hjalmar (*lowering his voice*). That was how we got it, you see. Father knows Pettersen a little, and heard this about the wild duck, and managed to get it handed over to him.

Gregers. And now it thrives quite well in the attic there?

Hjalmar. Yes, perfectly well. It has grown fat. It has been so long in there now that it has forgotten all about its own wild life; and that was all that was necessary.

Gregers. You are right there, Hjalmar. Only, never let it see the sky and the water.—But I mustn't stay any longer. I think your father has gone to sleep.

Hjalmar. Oh, don't go on that account.

Gregers. But, by the way—you said you had a room to let, a room you don't use?

Hjalmar. Yes—why? Do you happen to know anyone—?

Gregers. Can I have the room?

Hjalmar. You?

Gina. What, you, Mr. Werle?

Gregers. Can I have the room? If so, I will move in early to-morrow morning.

Hjalmar. Certainly, by all means—

Gina. But, Mr. Werle, it really isn't the sort of room to suit you.

Hjalmar. Gina, how can you say that!

Gina. Well, it isn't big enough or light enough, and—

Gregers. That doesn't matter at all, Mrs. Ekdal.

Hjalmar. I should call it a very nice room, and not so badly furnished either.

Gina. But remember the couple that are lodging underneath.

Gregers. Who are they?

Gina. One of them used to be a private tutor—

Hjalmar. Mr. Molvik—he has taken a degree—

Gina. And the other is a doctor of the name of Relling.

Gregers. Relling? I know him a little; he used to practise up at Höidal at one time.

Gina. They are a regular pair of good-for-nothings. They are often out on the spree in the evening, and they come home late at night and not always quite—

Gregers. I should easily get accustomed to that. I hope I shall settle down like the wild duck.

Gina. Well, I think you ought to sleep over it first, anyway.

Gregers. You don't seem to like the idea of having me in the house, Mrs. Ekdal.

Gina. Gracious me! what makes you think that?

Hjalmar. I must say it is extremely odd of you, Gina. (*To* GREGERS.) Tell me, do you propose remaining here in town for the present?

Gregers (*putting on his overcoat*). Yes, now I propose to remain here.

Hjalmar. But not at home with your father? What do you intend to do with yourself?

Gregers. Ah, if only I knew that, it would be all plain sailing. But when one has had the misfortune to be christened "Gregers"—"Gregers," and "Werle" to follow—did you ever hear anything so hideous?—

Hjalmar. It doesn't sound so to me.

Gregers (*shuddering*). I should feel inclined to spit on any fellow with a name like that. Once a man has had the misfortune to find himself saddled with the name of Gregers Werle, as I have—

Hjalmar (*laughing*). Ha, ha! Well, but if you weren't Gregers Werle, what would you like to be?

Gregers. If I could choose, I would rather be a clever dog than anything else.

Gina. A dog!

Hedvig (*involuntarily*). Oh no!

Gregers. Yes, an extraordinarily clever dog; the sort of dog that would go down to the bottom after wild duck, when they dive down and bite fast hold of the weed and wrack in the mud.

Hjalmar. I will tell you what it is, Gregers—I don't understand a word of all this.

Gregers. No, and I daresay the meaning is not very pretty either. Well, then, early to-morrow morning I will move in. (*To* GINA.) I shan't give you any trouble; I do everything for myself. (To HJALMAR.) We will finish our chat to-morrow. Good-night, Mrs. Ekdal. (*Nods to* HEDVIG.) Good-night.

Gina. Good-night, Mr. Werle.

Hedvig. Good-night.

Hjalmar (*who has lit a candle*). Wait a moment, I must give you a light; it is sure to be dark on the stair. (GREGERS *and* HJALMAR *go out by the outer door.*)

Gina (*staring in front of her, with her sewing lying on her lap*). A funny idea, to want to be a dog!

Hedvig. Do you know, mother—I believe he meant something quite different by that.

Gina. What else could he mean?

Hedvig. I don't know; but I thought he seemed to mean something quite different from what he said—all the time.

Gina. Do you think so? It certainly was queer.

Hjalmar (*coming back*). The lamp was still lit. (*Puts out the candle and lays it down.*) Now, at last one can get a chance of something to eat. (*Begins to eat the bread and butter.*) Well, you see, Gina—if only you keep your wits about you—

Gina. How do you mean, keep your wits about you?

Hjalmar. Well, anyway we have had a bit of luck, to succeed in letting the room at last. And, besides, to a man like Gregers—a dear old friend.

Gina. Well, I really don't know what to say about it.

Hedvig. Oh mother, you will see it will be lovely.

Hjalmar. You certainly are very odd. A little while ago you were so bent on letting the room, and now you don't like it.

Gina. Oh, I do, Hjalmar—if only it had been to someone else. What do you suppose his father will say?

Hjalmar. Old Werle? It is no business of his.

Gina. But you may be sure things have gone wrong between them again, as the young man is leaving his father's house. You know the sort of terms those two are on.

Hjalmar. That may be all very true, but—

Gina. And it is quite likely his father may think that you are at the bottom of it all.

Hjalmar. Let him think what he likes! Mr. Werle has done a wonderful lot for me; I am the last to want to deny it. But that is no reason why I should think myself bound to consult him in everything all my life.

Gina. But, Hjalmar dear, it might end in grandfather's suffering for it; he might lose the little bit of money he gets from Graaberg.

Hjalmar. I feel almost inclined to say I wish he might! Don't you suppose it is a humiliating thing for a man like me, to see his grey-haired old father treated like an outcast? But I think that sort of thing is nearly at an end. (*Takes another piece of bread and butter.*) I have a mission in life, and I shall fulfil it!

Hedvig. Oh yes, father, do!

Gina. Sh! Don't wake him up.

Hjalmar (*lowering his voice*). I *shall* fulfil it, I say. The day will come when—when—. And that is why it is a good thing we got the room let; it puts me in a more independent position. And a man who has a mission in life must be independent of others. (*Stands by his father's chair and speaks with emotion.*) Poor old white-haired father! You may depend on your Hjalmar! He has broad shoulders—strong shoulders, at any rate. Some fine day you shall wake up, and—. (*To* GINA.) Don't you believe it?

Gina (*getting up*). Of course I do; but the first thing is to see about getting him to bed.

Hjalmar. Yes, come along then. (*They lift the old man carefully.*)

ACT III

(SCENE.—HJALMAR EKDAL'S *studio, the following morning. The sun is shining in through the big window in the sloping roof, where the curtain has been drawn back.* HJALMAR *is sitting at the table busy retouching a photograph. Various other portraits are lying in front of him. After a few moments* GINA *comes in by the outer door, in hat and cloak, and carrying a covered basket.*)

Hjalmar. Back already, Gina?

Gina. Yes, I've no time to waste. (*She puts the basket down on a chair and takes her things off.*)

Hjalmar. Did you look in on Gregers?

Gina. Yes, that I did; and a nice sight too! He had made the room in a pretty state as soon as he arrived.

Hjalmar. How?

Gina. He said he wanted to do everything for himself, you know. So he tried to set the stove going; and what must he do but shut the register, so that the whole room was filled with smoke. Ouf!—there was a stink like—

Hjalmar. You don't mean it!

Gina. But that's not the best of it. He wanted to put the fire out then, so he emptied his ewer into the stove, and flooded the whole floor with a filthy mess.

Hjalmar. What a nuisance.

Gina. I have just got the porter's wife to clean up after him, the pig; but the room won't be fit to go into till the afternoon.

Hjalmar. What is he doing with himself in the meantime?

Gina. He said he would go out for a bit.

Hjalmar. I went to see him, too, for a minute, after you went out.

Gina. So he told me. You have asked him to lunch.

Hjalmar. Just for a snack of lunch, you know. The first day he is here—we could hardly do less. You are sure to have something in the house.

Gina. I will go and see what I can find.

Hjalmar. Don't be too scrimpy, though; because I fancy Relling and Molvik are coming up too. I happened to meet Relling on the stair, you see, and so I had to—

Gina. Are we to have those two as well?

Hjalmar. Bless my soul!—a little bit more or less can't make much difference.

(*Old* EKDAL *opens his door and looks in.*)

Ekdal. Look here, Hjalmar— (*Seeing* GINA.) Oh!

Gina. Do you want something, grandfather?

Ekdal. No, no—it doesn't matter. Hm! (*Goes into his room again.*)

Gina (*taking up her basket*). Keep your eye on him, and see he doesn't go out.

Hjalmar. Yes, yes, I will. Look here, Gina—a little herring salad would be rather nice; I rather fancy Relling and Molvik were making a night of it last night.

Gina. So long as they don't come before I am ready—

Hjalmar. They won't do that. Take your time.

Gina. Very well, and you can get a little work done in the meantime.

Hjalmar. Don't you see I *am* working? I am working as hard as I can.

Gina. You will be able to get those off your hands, you see. (*Takes her basket into the kitchen.* HJALMAR *resumes his work on the photographs with evident reluctance.*)

Ekdal (*peeps in, and, after looking round the studio, says in a low voice*). Have you finished that work?

Hjalmar. I am working away at these portraits—

Ekdal. Well, well, it doesn't matter—if you are so busy—Hm! (*Goes in again, but leaves his door open.*

HJALMAR *goes on working for a little in silence; then lays down his brush and goes to the door.*)

Hjalmar. Are you busy, father?

Ekdal (*from within, in an aggrieved voice*). If you are busy, I'm busy too. Hm!

Hjalmar. Quite so, quite so. (*Returns to his work. After a few moments* EKDAL *comes out of his room again.*)

Ekdal. Hm! Look here, Hjalmar, I am not so busy as all that.

Hjalmar. I thought you were doing your copying.

Ekdal. Deuce take Graaberg! Can't he wait a day or two? It's not a matter of life and death, I suppose.

Hjalmar. No; and you are not his slave, anyway.

Ekdal. And there is that other matter in there—

Hjalmar. Quite so. Do you want to go in? Shall I open the doors for you?

Ekdal. I don't think it would be a bad idea.

Hjalmar (*rising*). And then we shall have got *that* off our hands.

Ekdal. Just so, yes. It must be ready by to-morrow morning early. We did say to-morrow, didn't we? Eh?

Hjalmar. Yes, to-morrow.

(HJALMAR *and* EKDAL *each pull back a division of the sliding-door. The morning sun is shining in through the top-lights of the attic; some of the pigeons are flying about, others sitting cooing on the rafters; from time to time the sound of hens cackling is heard from the recesses of the attic.*)

Hjalmar. There—now you can start, father.

Ekdal (*going in*). Aren't you coming too?

Hjalmar. Well, I don't know—I think I—. (*Seeing* GINA *at the kitchen door.*) No, I haven't time; I must work. But we must use our patent arrangement. (*He pulls a cord and lowers a curtain, of which the bottom part is made out of a strip of old sailcloth, while the upper part is a fisherman's net stretched out. When it is down, the floor of the attic is no longer visible.*) That's it. Now I can sit down in peace for a little.

Gina. Is he rummaging about in there again?

Hjalmar. Would you rather he had gone straight to the wine-shop? (*Sitting down.*) Is there anything you want? You look so—

Gina. I only wanted to ask if you thought we could have lunch in here?

Hjalmar. Yes; I suppose we have no sitters coming as early as that?

Gina. No, I don't expect anyone except the engaged couple who want to be taken together.

Hjalmar. Why the devil can't they be taken together some other day!

Gina. It is all right, Hjalmar dear; I arranged to take them in the afternoon, when you are having your nap.

Hjalmar. That's capital! Yes, then, we will have lunch in here.

Gina. Very well, but there is no hurry about laying the lunch; you can have the table for a good while yet.

Hjalmar. Can't you see that I am taking every opportunity that I can to use the table!

Gina. Then you will be free afterwards, you see. (*Goes into the kitchen again. Short pause.*)

Ekdal (*standing in the attic doorway, behind the net*). Hjalmar!

Hjalmar. Well?

Ekdal. I am afraid we shall be obliged to move the water-trough after all.

Hjalmar. Exactly what I have said all along.

Ekdal. Hm—hm—hm! (*Moves away from the door.*)

(HJALMAR *goes on with his work for a little, then glances at the attic, and is just getting up when* HEDVIG *comes in from the kitchen; thereupon he sits down again promptly.*)

Hjalmar. What do you want?

Hedvig. Only to come in to you, father

Hjalmar (*after a moment's pause.*) You seem to be very inquisitive. Were you sent to watch me?

Hedvig. Of course not.

Hjalmar. What is your mother doing in there now?

Hedvig. She's busy making a herring salad. (*Goes up to the table.*) Isn't there any little thing I could help you with, father?

Hjalmar. No, no. It is right that I should be the one to work away at it all—as long as my strength holds out. There is no fear of my wanting help, Hedvig—at any rate so as long my health doesn't give way.

Hedvig. Oh, father—don't say such horrid things! (*She wanders about the room, then stands in the attic doorway and looks in.*)

Hjalmar. What is he about in there?

Hedvig. I fancy he is making a new path to the water-trough.

Hjalmar. He will never be able to manage that by himself. What a nuisance it is that I am obliged to sit here and—

Hedvig (*going to him*). Let me have the brush, father; I can do it, you know.

Hjalmar. Nonsense, you would only hurt your eyes.

Hedvig. Not a bit of it. Give me the brush.

Hjalmar (*getting up*). Well, certainly it wouldn't take me more than a minute or two.

Hedvig. Pooh! What harm can it do me? (*Takes the brush from him.*) Now then. (*Sits down.*) I have got one here as a model, you know.

Hjalmar. But don't hurt your eyes! Do you hear? I won't be responsible; you must take the responsibility yourself, understand that.

Hedvig (*going on with the work*). Yes, yes, I will.

Hjalmar. Clever little girl! Just for a minute or two, you understand. (*He stoops under the net and goes into the attic.* HEDVIG *sits still, working.* HJALMAR'S *voice and his* FATHER'S *are heard discussing something.*)

Hjalmar (*coming to the net*). Hedvig, just give me the pincers; they are on the shelf. And the chisel. (*Looks back into the attic.*) Now you will see, father. Just let me show you first what I mean. (HEDVIG *has fetched the tools, and gives them to him.*) Thanks. I think it was a good thing I came, you know. (*Goes into*

the attic. Sounds of carpentering and talking are heard from within. HEDVIG *stands looking after him. A moment later a knock is heard at the outer door, but she does not notice it.*)

Gregers Werle (*who is bareheaded and without an overcoat, comes in and stands for a moment in the doorway*). Ahem!

Hedvig (*turns round and goes to him*). Oh, good-morning! Won't you come in?

Gregers. Thanks. (*Glances towards the attic.*) You seem to have workmen in the house.

Hedvig. No, it's only father and grandfather. I will go and tell them.

Gregers. No, no, don't do that; I would rather wait a little. (*Sits down on the sofa.*)

Hedvig. It's so untidy here— (*Begins to collect the photographs.*)

Gregers. Oh, let them be. Are they portraits that want finishing?

Hedvig. Yes, just a little job I was helping father with.

Gregers. Any way, don't let me disturb you.

Hedvig. Oh, you don't. (*She draws the things to her again and sits down to her work.* GREGERS *watches her for a time without speaking.*)

Gregers. Has the wild duck had a good night?

Hedvig. Yes, thanks, I think it had.

Gregers (*turning towards the attic*). In the daylight it looks quite a different place from what it did in moonlight.

Hedvig. Yes, it has such a different look at different times. In the morning it looks quite different from in the evening, and when it rains you wouldn't think it was the same place as on a fine day.

Gregers. Ah, have you noticed that?

Hedvig. You couldn't help noticing it.

Gregers. Are you fond of being in there with the wild duck, too?

Hedvig. Yes, when I can—

Gregers. But I expect you haven't much time for that. I suppose you go to school?

Hedvig. No, I don't go to school any more. Father is afraid of my hurting my eyes.

Gregers. I see; I suppose he reads with you himself, then?

Hedvig. He has promised to read with me, but he hasn't had time so far.

Gregers. But isn't there anyone else to give you a little help?

Hedvig. Yes, there is Mr. Molvik, but he isn't always exactly—quite—that is to say—

Gregers. Not quite sober?

Hedvig. That's it.

Gregers. I see; then you have a good deal of time to yourself. And, in there, I suppose, it is like a little world of its own, isn't it?

Hedvig. Yes, exactly. And there are such lots of wonderful things in there.

Gregers. Are there?

Hedvig. Yes, there are great cupboards full of books, and in lots of the books there are pictures.

Gregers. I see.

Hedvig. And then there is an old desk with drawers and flaps in it; and a great clock with figures that ought to come out when it strikes. But the clock isn't going any longer.

Gregers. So time has ceased to exist in there—beside the wild duck.

Hedvig. Yes. And there is an old paint-box and things—and all the books.

Gregers. And you like reading the books?

Hedvig. Yes, when I can manage it. But the most of them are in English, and I can't read that; so then I look at the pictures. There is a great big book called *Harrison's History of London;* it is quite a hundred years old, and there's a tremendous lot of pictures in it. At the beginning there's a picture of Death, with an hour-glass, and a girl. I don't like that. But there are all the other pictures of churches, and castles, and streets, and big ships sailing on the sea.

Gregers. But, tell me, where did you get all these wonderful things from?

Hedvig. Oh, an old sea-captain lived here once, and he used to bring them home with him. They called him the Flying Dutchman; it was a funny thing to call him, because he wasn't a Dutchman at all.

Gregers. Wasn't he?

Hedvig. No. But one day he never came back, and all these things were left here.

Gregers. Tell me this—when you are sitting in there looking at the pictures, don't you want to get away out into the big world and see it for yourself?

Hedvig. Not I! I want to stay at home here always and help father and mother.

Gregers. To finish photographs?

Hedvig. No, not only that. What I should like best of all would be to learn to engrave pictures like those in the English books.

Gregers. Hm! what does your father say to that?

Hedvig. I don't think father likes it; he is so funny about that. Just fancy, he wants me to learn such absurd things as basket-making and straw-plaiting! I don't see any good in my doing that.

Gregers. Nor do I.

Hedvig. But father is right so far, that if I had learnt to make baskets, I could have made the new basket for the wild duck.

Gregers. Yes, so you could; and it was your business to see it was comfortable, wasn't it?

Hedvig. Yes, because it is my wild duck.

Gregers. Of course it is.

Hedvig. Yes, it's my very own. But I lend it to father and grandfather as long as they like.

Gregers. I see, but what do they want with it?

Hedvig. Oh, they look after it, and build places for it, and all that sort of thing.

Gregers. I see; it is the most important person in there.

Hedvig. That it is, because it is a real, true wild duck. Poor thing, it hasn't anyone to make friends with; isn't it a pity!

Gregers. It has no brothers and sisters, as the rabbits have.

Hedvig. No. The hens have got lots of others there, that they were chickens with; but it has come right away from all its friends, poor thing. It is all so mysterious about the wild duck. It has got no friends—and no one knows where it came from, either.

Gregers. And then it has been down to the ocean's depths.

Hedvig (*looks quickly at him, half smiles and asks*). Why do you say "the ocean's depths"?

Gregers. What else should I say?

Hedvig. You might have said "the bottom of the sea."

Gregers. Isn't it just the same if I say "the ocean's depths"?

Hedvig. It sounds so funny to me to hear anyone else say "the ocean's depths."

Gregers. Why? Tell me why?

Hedvig. No, I won't; it's only foolishness.

Gregers. It isn't. Tell me why you smiled.

Hedvig. It is because whenever I happen to think all at once—all in a moment—of what is in there, the whole room and all that is in it make me think of "the ocean's depths." But that's all nonsense.

Gregers. No, don't say that.

Hedvig. Well, it's nothing but an attic.

Gregers (*looking earnestly at her*). Are you so sure of that?

Hedvig (*astonished*). Sure that it's an attic?

Gregers. Yes; are you so sure of that?

(HEDVIG *is silent and looks at him open-mouthed.* GINA *comes in from the kitchen to lay the table.*)

Gregers (*rising*). I am afraid I have come too early.

Gina. Oh, well, you have got to be somewhere; and we shall very soon be ready. Clear up the table, Hedvig. (HEDVIG *gathers up the things; she and* GINA *lay the table during the following dialogue.* GREGERS *sits down in the armchair and turns over the pages of an album.*)

Gregers. I hear you can retouch photos, Mrs. Ekdal.

Gina (*glancing at him*). Mhm! I can.

Gregers. That must have come in very handy.

Gina. How do you mean?

Gregers. As Hjalmar has taken to photography, I mean.

Hedvig. Mother can take photographs too.

Gina. Oh, yes, of course I got taught to do that.

Gregers. I suppose it is you who run the business, then?

Gina. Well, when Hjalmar hasn't time himself, I—

Gregers. His old father takes up a great deal of his time, I suppose.

Gina. Yes, and it isn't the sort of work for a man like Hjalmar to go taking rubbishin' portraits all day long.

Gregers. Quite so; but still, when he had once gone in for the thing—

Gina. I will ask you to understand, Mr. Werle, that Hjalmar is not an ordinary photographer.

Gregers. Just so, just so; but— (*A shot is fired within the attic.* GREGERS *starts up.*) What's that!

Gina. Bah! now they are at their firing again.

Gregers. Do they use guns in there too?

Hedvig. They go out shooting.

Gregers. What on earth—? (*Goes to the attic door.*) Have you gone out shooting, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar (*inside the net*). Oh, are you there? I didn't know. I was so busy— (*To* HEDVIG.) To think of your not telling us! (*Comes into the studio.*)

Gregers. Do you go shooting in there in the attic?

Hjalmar (*showing a double barrelled pistol*). Oh, only with this old thing.

Gina. Yes, you and grandfather will do yourselves a mischief some day with that there gun.

Hjalmar (*angrily*). I think I have mentioned that a firearm of this kind is called a pistol.

Gina. Well, that doesn't make it much better, that I can see.

Gregers. So you have become a sportsman too, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar. Oh, we only go after a rabbit or two now and then. It is principally to please my father, you know.

Gina. Men are funny creatures, they must always have something to bemuse them.

Hjalmar (*irritably*). Quite so, quite so; men must always have something to *a*muse them.

Gina. Well, that's exactly what I said.

Hjalmar. Well,—ahem! (*To* GREGERS.) It happens very fortunately, you see, that the attic is so situated that no one can hear us shooting. (*Lays down the pistol on the top shelf of the bookcase.*) Don't touch the pistol, Hedvig; one barrel is loaded, remember.

Gregers (*looking through the net*). You have got a sporting gun too, I see.

Hjalmar. That is father's old gun. It won't shoot any longer, there is something gone wrong with the lock. But it is rather fun to have it there all the same; we can take it to pieces now and then and clean it, and grease it, and put it together again. Of course it's my father's toy, really.

Hedvig (*going to* GREGERS). Now you can see the wild duck properly.

Gregers. I was just looking at it. It seems to me to trail one wing a little.

Hjalmar. Well, no wonder; it was wounded.

Gregers. And it drags one foot a little—isn't that so?

Hjalmar. Perhaps just a tiny bit.

Hedvig. Yes, that was the foot the dog fixed its teeth into.

Hjalmar. But otherwise it hasn't the slightest blemish; and that is really remarkable when you consider that it has had a charge of shot in its wing and has been between a dog's teeth—

Gregers (*glancing at* HEDVIG). And has been down so long in the ocean's depths.

Hedvig (*with a smile*). Yes.

Gina (*standing by the table*). That blessed wild duck! The whole place is turned upside down for it.

Hjalmar. Ahem!—shall you soon have finished laying the table?

Gina. Yes, very soon. Come and help me, Hedvig, (*She and* HEDVIG *go into the kitchen.*)

Hjalmar (*in an undertone*). I think perhaps you had better not stand there watching my father; he doesn't like it. (GREGERS *comes away from the attic door.*) And I had better shut the doors, before the others arrive. Sh! sh! Get in with you! (*He hoists up the netting and pulls the doors together.*) That contrivance is my own invention. It is really quite an amusement to have things to contrive and to repair when they go wrong. Besides, it is an absolute necessity, you see, because Gina wouldn't like to have rabbits and fowls wandering about the studio.

Gregers. Of course not, and I suppose the studio is really your wife's domain?

Hjalmar. I hand over the ordinary business as much as possible to her, for that enables me to shut myself up in the sitting-room and give my mind to more important matters.

Gregers. What are they, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar. I wonder you haven't asked that before. But perhaps you haven't heard anyone speak of the invention?

Gregers. The invention? No.

Hjalmar. Really? You haven't heard of it? Oh well, of course, up there in those outlandish parts—

Gregers. Then you have made an invention?

Hjalmar. Not exactly made it yet, but I am working hard at it. You can surely understand that when I decided to take up photography, it was not with the idea of merely taking ordinary portraits.

Gregers. No, that is what your wife was saying to me just now.

Hjalmar. I vowed to myself that, if I devoted my powers to this trade, I would so dignify it, that it should become both an art and a science. And so I decided to make this remarkable invention.

Gregers. And what is the nature of the invention? What is the idea?

Hjalmar. My dear fellow, you mustn't ask me for details yet. It takes time, you know. And you mustn't suppose it is vanity that impels me. I assure you I

don't work for my own sake. No, no; it is the object of my life that is in my thoughts night and day.

Gregers. What object is that?

Hjalmar. Do you forget that poor old white-haired man?

Gregers. Your poor father? Yes, but what exactly can you do for him?

Hjalmar. I can revive his dead self-respect by restoring the name of Ekdal to honour and dignity.

Gregers. So that is the object of your life.

Hjalmar. Yes. I mean to rescue that poor shipwrecked being; for shipwrecked he was, when the storm broke over him. As soon as those horrible investigations were begun, he was no longer himself. That very pistol there—the same that we use to shoot rabbits with—has played its part in the tragedy of the Ekdals.

Gregers. That pistol! Indeed?

Hjalmar. When the sentence of imprisonment was pronounced, he had his pistol in his hand—

Gregers. Did he mean to—?

Hjalmar. Yes, but he did not dare. He was a coward; so dazed and so broken in spirit was he by that time. Can you conceive it? He, a soldier, a man who had shot nine bears and was the descendant of two lieutenant-colonels—one after the other, of course—. Can you conceive it, Gregers?

Gregers. Yes, I can conceive it very well.

Hjalmar. I can't. And I will tell you how the pistol a second time played a part in the history of our house. When they had dressed him in prison clothes and put him under lock and key—that was a terrible time for me, my friend. I kept the blinds down on both my windows. When I peeped out, I saw the sun shining as usual. I could not understand it. I saw people going along the street, laughing and talking about casual matters. I could not understand that. It seemed to me as if the whole universe must be standing still as if it were eclipsed.

Gregers. I felt exactly that when my mother died.

Hjalmar. It was at one of those moments that Hjalmar Ekdal pointed the pistol at his own heart.

Gregers. Then you too meant to—?

Hjalmar. Yes.

Gregers. But you didn't shoot?

Hjalmar. No. At that critical moment I gained the victory over myself. I went on living. But I can tell you it makes a call upon a man's courage to choose life under such conditions.

Gregers. Well, that depends how you look at it.

Hjalmar. No, there is no question about it. But it was best so, for now I shall soon have completed my invention; and Relling thinks, and so do I, that my father will be allowed to wear his uniform again. I shall claim that as my only reward.

Gregers. It is the matter of the uniform, then, that he—

Hjalmar. Yes, that is what he covets and yearns for most of all. You can't imagine how it cuts me to the heart. Every time we keep any little anniversary—such as our wedding-day, or anything of that sort—the old man comes in dressed in the uniform he used to wear in his happier days. But if he hears so much as a knock at the door, he hurries into his room again as fast as his poor old legs will carry him—because, you see, he daren't show himself like that to strangers. It is enough to break a son's heart to see it, I can tell you!

Gregers. And about when do you suppose the invention will be ready?

Hjalmar. Oh, bless my soul!—you can't expect me to tell you to a day! A man who has the inventive genius can't control it exactly as he wishes. Its working depends in great measure on inspiration—on a momentary suggestion—and it is almost impossible to tell beforehand at what moment it will come.

Gregers. But I suppose it is making good progress?

Hjalmar. Certainly it is making progress. Not a day passes without my turning it over in my mind. It possesses me entirely. Every afternoon, after I have had my lunch, I lock myself in the sitting-room where I

can ruminate in peace. But it is no use trying to hurry me; that can do no good—Relling says so, too.

Gregers. But don't you think all those arrangements in the attic there, distract you and divert your attention too much?

Hjalmar. Not a bit, not a bit; quite the contrary. You mustn't say that. It is impossible for me to be perpetually poring over the same exhausting train of ideas. I must have something as a secondary occupation, to fill in the blank hours when I am waiting for inspiration. Nothing that I am doing can prevent the flash of inspiration coming when it has to come.

Gregers. My dear Hjalmar, I am beginning to think you have something of the wild duck in you.

Hjalmar. Something of the wild duck? How do you mean?

Gregers. You have dived down and bitten yourself fast in the weeds.

Hjalmar. I suppose you refer to that well-nigh fatal blow that crippled my father, and me as well?

Gregers. Not exactly that. I won't say that you have been wounded, like the duck; but you have got into a poisonous marsh, Hjalmar; you have contracted an insidious disease and have dived down to the bottom to die in the dark.

Hjalmar. I? Die in the dark? Look here, Gregers, you really must stop talking such nonsense.

Gregers. Make your mind easy, I shall find a way to get you up to the surface again. I have got an object in life too, now; I discovered it yesterday.

Hjalmar. Maybe, but you will have the goodness to leave me out of it. I can assure you that—apart, of course, from my very natural melancholy—I feel as well as any man could wish to be.

Gregers. That very fact is a result of the poison.

Hjalmar. Now, my dear Gregers, be good enough not to talk any more nonsense about diseases and poisons. I am not accustomed to conversation of that sort; in my house no one ever speaks to me about ugly things.

Gregers. I can well believe it.

Hjalmar. Yes, that sort of thing doesn't suit me at all. And there *are* no marsh poisons, as you call them, here. The photographer's home is a humble one—that I know; and my means are small. But I am an inventor, let me tell you, and the breadwinner of a family. That raises me up above my humble circumstances.—Ah, here they come with the lunch!

(GINA *and* HEDVIG *bring in bottles of beer, a decanter of brandy, glasses, and so forth. At the same time* RELLING *and* MOLVIK *come in from the passage. They neither of them have hats or overcoats on;* MOLVIK *is dressed in black.*)

Gina (*arranging the table*). Ah, you have just come at the right moment.

Relling. Molvik thought he could smell herring-salad, and then there was no holding him. Good-morning again, Ekdal.

Hjalmar. Gregers, let me introduce Mr. Molvik, and Doctor—ah, of course you know Relling?

Gregers. Slightly, yes.

Relling. Mr. Werle junior, isn't it? Yes, we have had one or two passages-at-arms up at the Höidal works. Have you just moved in?

Gregers. I only moved in this morning.

Relling. Molvik and I live just below you; so you haven't far to go for a doctor or a parson, if you should need them!

Gregers. Thanks, it is quite possible I may; because yesterday we were thirteen at table.

Hjalmar. Oh, come—don't get on to ugly topics again!

Relling. You may make your mind easy, Ekdal; it isn't you that events point to.

Hjalmar. I hope not, for my family's sake. But now let us sit down, and eat, drink, and be merry.

Gregers. Shall we not wait for your father?

Hjalmar. No, he likes to have his lunch in his own room, later. Come along!

(*The men sit down at table, and eat and drink.* GINA *and* HEDVIG *move about, waiting on them.*)

Relling. Molvik was disgracefully drunk again yesterday, Mrs. Ekdal.

Gina. What? Yesterday again?

Relling. Didn't you hear him when I came home with him last night?

Gina. No, I can't say I did.

Relling. It is just as well; Molvik was disgusting last night.

Gina. Is that true, Mr. Molvik?

Molvik. Let us draw a veil over last night's doings. Such things have no connection with my better self.

Relling (*to Gregers*). It comes over him like a spell; and then I have to go out on the spree with him. Mr. Molvik is a demoniac, you see.

Gregers. A demoniac?

Relling. Molvik is a demoniac, yes.

Gregers. Hm!

Relling. And demoniacs are not capable of keeping to a perfectly straight line through life; they have to stray a little bit now and then.—Well, and so you can still stand it up at those disgustingly dirty works?

Gregers. I have stood it till now.

Relling. And has your "demand," that you used to go about presenting, been met?

Gregers. My demand? (*Understanding him.*) Oh, I see.

Hjalmar. What is this demand of yours, Gregers?

Gregers. He is talking nonsense.

Relling. It is perfectly true. He used to go round to all the cottagers' houses presenting what he called "the demand of the ideal."

Gregers. I was young then.

Relling. You are quite right, you were very young. And as for the "demand of the ideal," I never heard of your getting anyone to meet it while I was up there.

Gregers. Nor since, either.

Relling. Ah, I expect you have learnt enough to make you reduce the amount of your demand.

Gregers. Never when I am dealing with a man who *is* a man.

Hjalmar. That seems to me very reasonable. A little butter, Gina.

Relling. And a piece of pork for Molvik.

Molvik. Ugh! not pork!

(*Knocking is heard at the attic door.*)

Hjalmar. Open the door, Hedvig; father wants to come out.

(HEDVIG *opens the door a little. Old* EKDAL *comes in, holding a fresh rabbit-skin. He shuts the door after him.*)

Ekdal. Good-morning, gentlemen. I have had good sport; shot a big one.

Hjalmar. And you have skinned it without me—!

Ekdal. Yes, and salted it too. Nice, tender meat, rabbit's meat; and sweet, too; tastes like sugar. I hope you will enjoy your lunch, gentlemen! (*Goes into his room.*)

Molvik (*getting up*). Excuse me—I can't—I must go downstairs at once—

Relling. Have some soda-water, you duffer!

Molvik (*hurrying away*). Ugh!—Ugh! (*Goes out by the outer door.*)

Relling (*to* HJALMAR). Let us drink to the old sportsman's health.

Hjalmar (*clinking glasses with him*). To the old sportsman on the brink of the grave!—yes.

Relling. To the grey-haired — (*drinks*) — tell me, is it grey hair he has got, or white?

Hjalmar. As a matter of fact, it is between the two; but, as far as that goes, he hasn't much hair of any kind left.

Relling. Oh, well—a wig will take a man through the world. You are really very fortunate, you know, Ekdal. You have got a splendid object in life to strive after—

Hjalmar. And you may be sure I *do* strive after it.

Relling. And you have got your clever wife, paddling about in her felt slippers, with that comfortable waddle of hers, making everything easy and cosy for you.

Hjalmar. Yes, Gina—(*nodding—to her*) you are an excellent companion to go through life with, my dear.

Gina. Oh, don't sit there making fun of me.

Relling. And then your little Hedvig, Ekdal!

Hjalmar (*with emotion*). My child, yes! My child first and foremost. Come to me, Hedvig. (*Stroking her hair.*) What day is to-morrow?

Hedvig (*shaking him*). No, you mustn't say anything about it, father.

Hjalmar. It makes my heart bleed to think what a meagre affair it will be—just a little festive gathering in the attic there—

Hedvig. But that will be just lovely, father!

Relling. Only wait till the great invention is finished, Hedvig!

Hjalmar. Yes, indeed—then you will see! Hedvig, I am determined to make your future safe. You shall live in comfort all your life. I shall demand something for you—something or other; and that shall be the poor inventor's only reward.

Hedvig (*throwing her arms round his neck*). Dear, dear father!

Relling (*to* GREGERS). Well, don't you find it very pleasant, for a change, to sit at a well-furnished table in the midst of a happy family circle?

Gregers. As far as I am concerned, I don't thrive in a poisonous atmosphere.

Relling. A poisonous atmosphere?

Hjalmar. Oh, don't begin that nonsense again!

Gina. Goodness knows there's no poisonous atmosphere here, Mr. Werle; I air the place thoroughly every mortal day.

Gregers (*rising from table*). No airing will drive away the foulness I refer to.

Hjalmar. Foulness!

Gina. What do you think of that, Hjalmar!

Relling. Excuse me, but isn't it more likely that you yourself have brought the foulness with you from the mines up there.

Gregers. It is just like you to suggest that what I bring to a house is foulness.

Relling (*going up to him*). Listen to me, Mr. Werle

junior. I have a strong suspicion that you are going about still with the original unabridged "demand of the ideal" in your pocket.

Gregers. I carry it in my heart.

Relling. Carry the damned thing where you like; but I advise you not to play at presenting demand notes here, as long as I am in the house.

Gregers. And suppose I do, nevertheless?

Relling. Then you will go downstairs head first. Now you know.

Hjalmar (*rising*). Really, Relling!

Gregers. Well, throw me out, then—

Gina (*interposing*). You mustn't do any such thing, Mr. Relling. But this I will say, Mr. Werle; it doesn't come well from you, who made all that filthy mess with your stove, to come in here and talk about foulness. (*A knock is heard at the outer door.*)

Hedvig. Somebody is knocking, mother.

Hjalmar. There now, I suppose we are going to be pestered with people!

Gina. Let me go and see. (*She goes to the door and opens it, starts, shudders and draws back.*) Oh, my goodness!

(*The elder* WERLE, *wearing a fur coat, steps into the doorway.*)

Werle. Pardon me, but I fancy my son is living in this house.

Gina (*breathlessly*). Yes.

Hjalmar (*coming up to them*). Mr. Werle, won't you be so good as to—

Werle. Thanks. I only want to speak to my son.

Gregers. What do you want? Here I am.

Werle. I want to speak to you in your own room.

Gregers. In my own room—very well. (*Turns to go.*)

Gina. No, goodness knows it is not in a state for you to—

Werle. Well, outside in the passage, then. I want to see you alone.

Hjalmar. You can do so here, Mr. Werle. Come into the sitting-room, Relling.

(HJALMAR *and* RELLING *go out to the right.* GINA *takes* HEDVIG *with her into the kitchen.*)

Gregers (*after a short pause*). Well, here we are, alone now.

Werle. You made use of certain expressions last night—and, seeing that now you have taken up your abode with the Ekdals, I am driven to suppose that you are meditating some scheme or other against me.

Gregers. I am meditating opening Hjalmar Ekdal's eyes. He shall see his position as it really is; that is all.

Werle. Is this the object in life that you spoke of yesterday?

Gregers. Yes. You have left me no other.

Werle. Is it I that have upset your mind, Gregers?

Gregers. You have upset my whole life. I am not thinking of what we said about my mother—but it is you I have to thank for the fact that I am harried and tortured by a guilt-laden conscience.

Werle. Oh, it's your conscience that you are crazy about, is it?

Gregers. I ought to have taken a stand against you long ago, when the trap was laid for Lieutenant Ekdal. I ought to have warned him, for I suspected then what the outcome of it would be.

Werle. Yes, you should have spoken then.

Gregers. I had not the courage to; I was so cowed and so scared of you. I can't tell you how afraid I was of you, both then and long after.

Werle. You are not afraid of me now, apparently.

Gregers. No, fortunately. The wrong that both I and—others have done to old Ekdal can never be undone; but I can set Hjalmar free from the falsehood and dissimulation that are dragging him down.

Werle. Do you imagine you will do any good by that?

Gregers. I am confident of it.

Werle. Do you really think Hjalmar Ekdal is the sort of man to thank you for such a service?

Gregers. Certainly.

Werle. Hm!—we shall see.

Gregers. And, besides, if I am to go on living, I must do something to cure my sick conscience.

Werle. You will never cure it. Your conscience has been sickly from childhood. It is an inheritance from your mother, Gregers—the only thing she did leave you.

Gregers (*with a bitter smile*). Haven't you managed yet to get over your mistaken calculation in thinking a fortune was coming to you with her?

Werle. Don't let us talk about irrelevant matters. Are you determined on this course?—to set Hjalmar Ekdal on what you suppose to be the right scent?

Gregers. Yes, quite determined.

Werle. Well, in that case, I might have spared myself the trouble of coming here; because I suppose it isn't any use asking you to come home again.

Gregers. No.

Werle. And you won't come into the firm, either?

Gregers. No.

Werle. So be it. But now that I propose to make a new marriage, the estate will be divided between us.

Gregers (*quickly*). No, I won't have that.

Werle. You won't have it?

Gregers. No, I won't have it. My conscience forbids it.

Werle (*after a short pause*). Shall you go up to the works again?

Gregers. No. I don't consider myself in your service any longer.

Werle. But what are you going to do?

Gregers. Only attain the object of my life; nothing else.

Werle. Yes—but afterwards? What will you live on?

Gregers. I have saved a little out of my pay.

Werle. That won't last you long.

Gregers. I think it will last out my time.

Werle. What do you mean?

Gregers. I shall answer no more questions.

Werle. Good-bye, then, Gregers.

Gregers. Good-bye. (WERLE *goes out.*)

Hjalmar (*peeping in*). Has he gone?

Gregers. Yes. (HJALMAR *and* RELLING *come in; at the same time* GINA *and* HEDVIG *come from the kitchen.*)

Relling. That lunch was a failure.

Gregers. Get your things on, Hjalmar; you must come for a long walk with me.

Hjalmar. With pleasure. What did your father want? Was it anything to do with me?

Gregers. Come along out; we must have a little talk. I will go and get my coat. (*Goes out.*)

Gina. You oughtn't to go out with him, Hjalmar.

Relling. No, don't. Stay where you are.

Hjalmar (*taking his hat and coat*). What do you mean! When an old friend feels impelled to open his mind to me in private—?

Relling. But, devil take it, can't you see the fellow is mad, crazy, out of his senses!

Gina. It is quite true. His mother had fits of that kind from time to time.

Hjalmar. Then he has all the more need of a friend's watchful eye. (*To* GINA.) Be sure and see that dinner is ready in good time. Good-bye just now. (*Goes out by the outer door.*)

Relling. It's a great pity the fellow didn't go to hell in one of the mines at Höidal.

Gina. Good lord!—what makes you say that?

Relling (*muttering*). Oh, I have my own reasons.

Gina. Do you think he is really mad?

Relling. No, unfortunately. He is not madder than most people. But he has got a disease in his system, right enough.

Gina. What is the matter with him?

Relling. I will tell you, Mrs. Ekdal. He is suffering from acute rectitudinal fever.

Gina. Rectitudinal fever?

Hedvig. Is that a kind of disease?

Relling. Indeed it is; it is a national disease; but it only crops up sporadically. (*Nods to* GINA.) Thanks for my lunch. (*Goes out by the outer door.*)

Gina (*walking about uneasily*). Ugh!—that Gregers Werle—he was always a horrid creature.

Hedvig (*standing at the table and looking searchingly at her*). It all seems to me very odd.

ACT IV

(THE SAME SCENE.—*A photograph has just been taken; the camera, with a cloth thrown over it, a stand, a couple of chairs and a small table are in the middle of the floor. Afternoon light; the sun is on the point of setting; a little later it begins to grow dark.* GINA *is standing at the open door, with a small box and a wet glass plate in her hands, speaking to someone outside.*)

Gina. Yes, without fail. If I promise a thing, I keep my word. The first dozen shall be ready by Monday. Good-morning! (*Steps are heard going down the stair.* GINA *shuts the door, puts the plate in the box and replaces the whole in the camera.* HEDVIG *comes in from the kitchen.*)

Hedvig. Are they gone?

Gina (*tidying the room*). Yes, thank goodness I have finished with them at last.

Hedvig. Can you imagine why father hasn't come home yet?

Gina. Are you sure he is not downstairs with Relling?

Hedvig. No, he isn't. I went down the back-stair just now to see.

Gina. And there is the dinner standing and getting cold for him.

Hedvig. Think of father being so late! He is always so particular to come home in time for dinner.

Gina. Oh, he will come directly, no doubt.

Hedvig. I wish he would; it seems so odd here to-day, somehow.

Gina (*calls out*). Here he is! (HJALMAR *comes in from the passage.*)

Hedvig (*going to him*). Father, we have been waiting such a time for you!

Gina (*glancing at him*). What a long time you have been out, Hjalmar.

Hjalmar (*without looking at her*). I was rather long, yes. (*He takes off his overcoat.* GINA *and* HEDVIG *offer to help him, but he waves them aside.*)

Gina. Perhaps you have had your dinner with Mr. Werle.

Hjalmar (*hanging up his coat*). No.

Gina (*going towards the kitchen*). I will bring it in for you, then.

Hjalmar. No, let it be. I don't want anything to eat now.

Hedvig (*going up to him*). Aren't you well, father?

Hjalmar. Well? Oh, yes, well enough. Gregers and I had a very exhausting walk.

Gina. You shouldn't have done that, Hjalmar; you are not accustomed to it.

Hjalmar. Ah!—one has to get accustomed to a great many things in this world. (*Walks up and down.*) Has anyone been here while I was out?

Gina. No one but the engaged couple.

Hjalmar. No new orders?

Gina. No, not to-day.

Hedvig. Someone is sure to come to-morrow, father, you will see.

Hjalmar. Let us hope so. To-morrow I intend to set to work as hard as I can.

Hedvig. To-morrow! But—have you forgotten what day to-morrow is?

Hjalmar. Ah, that is true. Well, the day after to-morrow then. For the future I mean to do everything myself; I don't wish anyone to help me in the work at all.

Gina. But what's the good of that, Hjalmar? It will only make your life miserable. I can do the photographing all right, and you can give your time to the invention.

Hedvig. And to the wild duck, father—and all the hens and rabbits.

Hjalmar. Don't talk such nonsense! From to-morrow I am never going to set foot in the attic again.

Hedvig. But, father, you know you promised me that to-morrow we should have a little festivity—

Hjalmar. That's true. Well, from the day after to-morrow, then. As for that confounded wild duck, I should have great pleasure in wringing its neck!

Hedvig (*with a scream*). The wild duck!

Gina. Did you ever hear such a thing!

Hedvig (*pulling him by the arm*). Yes, but, father, it is my wild duck!

Hjalmar. That is why I won't do it. I haven't the heart—haven't the heart to do it, for your sake Hedvig. But I feel in the bottom of my heart that I ought to do it. I ought not to tolerate under my roof a single creature that has been in that man's hands.

Gina. But, good heavens, as it was from that ass Pettersen that grandfather got it—

Hjalmar (*walking up and down*). But there are certain claims—what shall I call them?—let us say claims of the ideal—absolute demands on a man, that he cannot set aside without injuring his soul.

Hedvig (*following him about*). But think, father, the wild duck—the poor wild duck!

Hjalmar (*standing still*). Listen. I will spare it—for your sake. I will not hurt a hair of its head—well, as I said, I will spare it. There are greater difficulties than that to be tackled. Now you must go out for a little, as usual, Hedvig; it is dark enough now for you.

Hedvig. No, I don't want to go out now.

Hjalmar. Yes, you must go out. Your eyes seem to me to be watering. All these vapours in here are not good for you. There is a bad atmosphere in this house.

Hedvig. All right; I will run down the back-stair and go for a little stroll. My cloak and hat—? Oh, they are in my room. Father—promise you won't do the wild duck any harm while I am out.

Hjalmar. It shall not lose a feather of its head. (*Drawing her to him.*) You and I, Hedvig—we two!—now run along, dear. (HEDVIG *nods to her parents and goes out through the kitchen.* HJALMAR *walks up and down without raising his eyes.*) Gina!

Gina. Yes?

Hjalmar. From to-morrow—or let us say from the day after to-morrow—I should prefer to keep the household books myself.

Gina. You want to keep the household books too!

Hjalmar. Yes, or at any rate to keep account of what our income is.

Gina. Bless the man—that's simple enough!

Hjalmar. I am not sure; you seem to me to make what I give you go an astonishingly long way. (*Stands still and looks at her.*) How do you manage it?

Gina. Because Hedvig and I need so little.

Hjalmar. Is it true that father is so liberally paid for the copying he does for old Mr. Werle?

Gina. I don't know about it's being so liberal. I don't know what is usually paid for that kind of work.

Hjalmar. Well, roughly speaking, what does he make? Tell me.

Gina. It varies; roughly speaking, I should say it is about what he costs us and a little pocket-money over.

Hjalmar. What he costs us! And you have never told me that before?

Gina. No, I couldn't. You seemed so pleased to think that he had everything from you.

Hjalmar. And in reality he had it from old Werle!

Gina. Oh, well, Mr. Werle has got plenty to spare.

Hjalmar. Light the lamp for me, please.

Gina (*lighting it*). Besides, we don't really know if it is Mr. Werle himself; it might be Graaberg—

Hjalmar. Why do you want to shift it on to Graaberg?

Gina. I know nothing about it; I only thought—

Hjalmar. Hm!

Gina. It wasn't me that got the copying for grandfather, remember that. It was Bertha, when she came to the house.

Hjalmar. Your voice seems to me to be unsteady.

Gina (*putting the shade on the lamp*). Does it?

Hjalmar. And your hands are shaking, aren't they?

Gina (*firmly*). Tell me straight, Hjalmar, what nonsense has he been telling you about me?

Hjalmar. Is it true—can it possibly be true—that there was anything between you and old Mr. Werle when you were in service there?

Gina. It's not true. Not then. Mr. Werle was always after me, true enough. And his wife thought there was something in it; and then there was the devil's own fuss. Not a moment's peace did she give me, that woman—and so I threw up my place.

Hjalmar. But afterwards?

Gina. Well, then I went home. And my mother—she wasn't what you thought her, Hjalmar; she talked a heap of nonsense to me about this, that and the other. Mr. Werle was a widower by that time, you know.

Hjalmar. Well, and then?

Gina. It's best you should know it. He never let me alone, till he had had his way.

Hjalmar (*clasping his hands*). And this is the mother of my child! How could you conceal such a thing from me?

Gina. It was wrong of me, I know. I ought to have told you about it long ago.

Hjalmar. You ought to have told me at the first,—then I should have known what sort of a woman you were.

Gina. But would you have married me, all the same?

Hjalmar. How can you suppose such a thing!

Gina. No; and that's why I didn't dare to tell you anything then. I had got to love you so dearly, as you know. And I couldn't make myself utterly wretched—

Hjalmar (*walking about*). And this is my Hedvig's mother! And to know that I owe everything I see here—(*kicks at a chair*)—my whole home—to a favoured predecessor! Ah, that seducer, Werle!

Gina. Do you regret the fourteen—the fifteen years we have lived together?

Hjalmar (*standing in front of her*). Tell me this. Haven't you regretted every day—every hour—this web of lies you have enmeshed me in? Answer me!

Haven't you really suffered agonies of regret and remorse?

Gina. My dear Hjalmar, I have had plenty to do thinking about the housekeeping and all the work there was to do every day—

Hjalmar. Then you never wasted a thought on what your past had been!

Gina. No—God knows I had almost forgotten all about that old trouble.

Hjalmar. Oh, this callous, insensate content! There is something so shocking about it, to me. Just think of it!—not a moment's regret.

Gina. But you tell me this, Hjalmar—what would have become of you if you hadn't found a wife like me?

Hjalmar. A wife like you!

Gina. Yes; I have always been a better business man than you, so to speak. Of course, it is true I am a year or two older than you.

Hjalmar. What would have become of me?

Gina. Yes, you had got into all sorts of bad ways when you first met me; you can't deny that.

Hjalmar. You talk about bad ways? You can't understand how a man feels when he is overcome with grief and despair—especially a man of my ardent temperament.

Gina. No, very likely not. And I oughtn't to say much about it anyway, because you made a real good husband as soon as you had a home of your own. And here we had got such a comfortable, cosy home, and Hedvig and I were just beginning to be able to spend a little bit on ourselves for food and clothes—

Hjalmar. In a swamp of deceit, yes.

Gina. If only that hateful fellow hadn't poked his nose in here!

Hjalmar. I used to think, too, that I had a happy home. It was a delusion. Where am I to look now for the necessary incentive to bring my invention into existence? Perhaps it will die with me; and then it will be your past, Gina, that has killed it.

Gina (*on the brink of tears*). Don't talk about such

things, Hjalmar. I, that have all along only wanted what was best for you!

Hjalmar. I ask you—what has become of the dream of the bread-winner now? When I lay in there on the sofa, thinking over my invention, I used to have a presentiment that it would use up all my powers. I used to feel that when the great day came when I should hold my patent in my hands, that day would be the day of my—departure. And it was my dream, too, that you would be left as the well-to-do widow of the departed inventor.

Gina (*wiping away her tears*). You mustn't talk such nonsense, Hjalmar. I pray God I never may live to see the day when I am left a widow!

Hjalmar. Well, it is of no consequence now. It is all over now, anyway—all over now!

(GREGERS WERLE *opens the outer door cautiously and looks in.*)

Gregers. May I come in?

Hjalmar. Yes, come in.

Gregers (*advances with a beaming, happy face, and stretches out his hand to them*). Well, you dear people—! (*Looks alternately at one and the other, and whispers to* HJALMAR.) Haven't you done it yet?

Hjalmar (*aloud*). It is done.

Gregers. It is?

Hjalmar. I have passed through the bitterest moment of my life.

Gregers. But the most elevating too, I expect.

Hjalmar. Well, we have got it off our hands for the present, anyway.

Gina. God forgive you, Mr. Werle.

Gregers (*greatly surprised*). But, I don't understand.

Hjalmar. What don't you understand?

Gregers. After such a momentous enlightenment—an enlightenment that is to be the starting-point of a completely new existence — a real companionship, founded on truth and purged of all falsehood—

Hjalmar. Yes, I know; I know.

Gregers. I certainly expected, when I came in, to be

met by the light of transfiguration in the faces of you both. And yet I see nothing but gloomy, dull, miserable—

Gina (*taking off the lampshade*). Quite so.

Gregers. I daresay you won't understand me, Mrs. Ekdal. Well, well—you will in time. But you, Hjalmar? You must feel consecrated afresh by this great enlightenment?

Hjalmar. Yes, of course I do. That is to say—in a sort of way.

Gregers. Because there is surely nothing in the world that can compare with the happiness of forgiveness and of lifting up a guilty sinner in the arms of love.

Hjalmar. Do you think it is so easy for a man to drink the bitter cup that I have just drained?

Gregers. No, not for an ordinary man, I daresay. But for a man like you—!

Hjalmar. Good heavens, I know that well enough. But you mustn't rush me, Gregers. It takes time, you know.

Gregers. You have a lot of the wild duck in you, Hjalmar.

(RELLING *has come in by the outer door.*)

Relling. Hullo! are you talking about the old wild duck again?

Hjalmar. Yes, the one old Mr. Werle winged.

Relling. Old Mr. Werle—? Is it him you are talking about?

Hjalmar. Him and—the rest of us.

Relling (*half aloud, to* GREGERS). I wish the devil would fly away with you!

Hjalmar. What are you saying?

Relling. I was breathing an earnest wish that this quack doctor would take himself off home. If he stays here he is capable of being the death of both of you.

Gregers. No harm is coming to these two, Mr. Relling. I won't speak about Hjalmar; we know him. And as for his wife, I have little doubt that she, too, has the springs of trustworthiness and sincerity deep down in her heart.

Gina (*nearly crying*). Then you ought to have let me be as I was.

Relling (*to* GREGERS). Would it be indiscreet to ask precisely what you think you are doing here?

Gregers. I am trying to lay the foundation of a true marriage.

Relling. Then you don't think Ekdal's marriage is good enough as it is?

Gregers. Oh, it is as good a marriage as many others, I daresay. But a true marriage it has never yet been.

Hjalmar. You have never had your eyes opened to the demands of the ideal, Relling.

Relling. Rubbish, my dear chap!—But, excuse me, Mr. Werle, how many "true marriages," roughly speaking, have you seen in your life?

Gregers. I scarcely think I have seen a single one.

Relling. Nor I either.

Gregers. But I have seen such hundreds of marriages of the opposite kind, and I have had the opportunity of watching at close quarters the mischief such a marriage may do to both parties.

Hjalmar. A man's moral character may be completely sapped: that is the dreadful part of it.

Relling. Well, I have never exactly been married, so I can't lay down the law on the matter. But this I do know, that the child is part of the marriage too—and you must leave the child in peace.

Hjalmar. Ah—Hedvig! My poor little Hedvig!

Relling. Yes, you will have the goodness to keep Hedvig out of the matter. You two are grown people; goodness knows, you may play ducks and drakes with your happiness, for all I care. But you must walk warily with Hedvig, believe me; otherwise it may end in your doing her a great mischief.

Hjalmar. A great mischief?

Relling. Yes, or it may end in her doing a great mischief to herself—and perhaps to others too.

Gina. But how can you know anything about it, Mr. Relling?

Hjalmar. There is no imminent danger for her eyes, is there?

Relling. What I mean has nothing to do with her eyes at all. But Hedvig is at a critical age. She may take all sorts of strange fancies into her head.

Gina. There!—and to be sure she is doing that already! She has begun to be very fond of meddling with the fire, out in the kitchen. She calls it playing at houses-on-fire. Often and often I have been afraid she *would* set the house on fire.

Relling. There you are. I knew it.

Gregers (*to* RELLING). But how do you explain such a thing?

Relling (*sulkily*). She is becoming a woman, my friend.

Hjalmar. So long as the child has me—! So long as my life lasts—! (*A knock is heard at the door.*)

Gina. Hush, Hjalmar; there is someone outside. (*Calls out.*) Come in! (Mrs. SÖRBY, *dressed in outdoor clothes, comes in.*)

Mrs. Sörby. Good-evening!

Gina (*going to her*). Bertha!—is it you!

Mrs. Sörby. Certainly it's me! But perhaps I have come at an inconvenient time?

Hjalmar. Not at all; a messenger from *that* house—

Mrs. Sörby (*to* GINA). To tell you the truth, I rather hoped I shouldn't find your men-folk at home just now; I just ran up to have a little chat with you and say good-bye.

Gina. Oh? Are you going away?

Mrs. Sörby. Early to-morrow morning, yes—up to Höidal. Mr. Werle went this afternoon. (*Meaningly, to* GREGERS.) He asked to be remembered to you.

Gina. Just fancy—!

Hjalmar. So Mr. Werle has gone away?—and now you are going to join him?

Mrs. Sörby. Yes, what do you say to that, Mr. Ekdal?

Hjalmar. Be careful what you are doing, I say.

Gregers. I can explain. My father and Mrs. Sörby are going to be married!

Hjalmar. Going to be married!

Gina. Oh, Bertha! Has it come to that?

Relling (*his voice faltering a little*). Is this really true?

Mrs. Sörby. Yes, my dear Relling, it is perfectly true.

Relling. Are you going to marry again?

Mrs. Sörby. Yes, that's what it has come to. Mr. Werle has got a special licence, and we are going to get married very quietly up at the works.

Gregers. Then I suppose I must wish you happiness, like a good stepson.

Mrs. Sörby. Many thanks—if you mean it. And I am sure I hope it will mean happiness, both for Mr. Werle and for me.

Relling. You can confidently hope that. Mr. Werle never gets drunk—so far as I know; and I don't imagine he is in the habit of ill-treating his wives, either, as the late lamented horse-doctor used to do.

Mrs. Sörby. Sörby is dead; let him alone. And even he had his good points.

Relling. Mr. Werle has points that are better, I expect.

Mrs. Sörby. At any rate he hasn't wasted all that was best in him. A man who does that must take the consequences.

Relling To-night I shall go out with Molvik.

Mrs. Sörby. That is wrong of you. Don't do that—for my sake, don't.

Relling. There is nothing else for it. (*To Hjalmar.*) You can come too, if you like.

Gina. No, thank you. Hjalmar is not going with you to places of *that* kind.

Hjalmar (*half aloud in an irritated voice*). Oh, do hold your tongue!

Relling. Good-bye, Mrs.—Werle. (*Goes out at the outer door.*)

Gregers (*to* Mrs. SÖRBY.) You and Doctor Relling seem to know each other pretty well.

Mrs. Sörby. Yes, we have known each other many

years. At one time it looked as if our friendship were going to ripen into something warmer.

Gregers. But, luckily for you, I suppose, it didn't.

Mrs. Sörby. You may well say so. But I have always been chary of giving way to impulse. A woman mustn't absolutely throw herself away, either.

Gregers. Are you not in the least afraid of my letting my father get a hint of this old acquaintance?

Mrs. Sörby. Of course I have told him about it myself.

Gregers. Indeed?

Mrs. Sörby. Your father knows every single thing with a grain of truth in it that anyone could find to tell him about me. I have told him absolutely everything; it was the first thing I did when he made it evident what his intentions were.

Gregers. Then you have been more frank than is usually the case, I expect.

Mrs. Sörby. I always have been frank. It is the best way for us women.

Hjalmar. What do you say to that, Gina?

Gina. Oh, women are all so different. Some are built that way; some aren't.

Mrs. Sörby. Well, Gina, I believe now that the wisest line to take is the one I have taken. And Mr. Werle hasn't concealed anything on his side, either. It is that, you see, that knits us so closely together. Now he can sit and talk to me as fearlessly as a child. That is a thing he has never had a chance of doing yet. All his young days, and for the best years of his life, when he was a healthy and vigorous man, he had to sit and listen to nothing but sermons on his sins. And very often the point of the sermons turned on the most imaginary offences—at least, so it seems to me.

Gina. Yes, it's quite certain that's true.

Gregers. If you ladies are going into those subjects, I had better take my leave.

Mrs. Sörby. Oh, you can stay, for that matter. I won't say a word more. But I wanted you to understand that I have done nothing deceitful or in the least

degree underhand. Very likely you think I am coming in for a great slice of luck; and so I am, in a way. But, all the same, I don't believe I shall be taking more than I shall be giving. At any rate I shall never forsake him; And what I *can* do is to look after him and care for him as no one else can, now that he will soon be helpless.

Hjalmar. Soon be helpless?

Gregers (*to* MRS. SÖRBY). Don't speak of that here.

Mrs. Sörby. There is no use concealing it any longer, however much he would like to. He is going blind.

Hjalmar (*with a start*). Going blind? That is extraordinary. Is he going blind too?

Gina. A great many people do.

Mrs. Sörby. And one can well imagine what that means to a business man. Well, I shall try to use my eyes for him as well as I can. But I mustn't stay any longer; I am frightfully busy just now.—Oh, I was to tell you this, Mr. Ekdal, that if there were anything in which Mr. Werle could be of service to you, you were just to go to Graaberg about it.

Gregers. A message that I should think Hjalmar Ekdal would be *very* grateful for!

Mrs. Sörby. Really? I rather think there was a time when—

Gina. He's quite right, Bertha. Hjalmar doesn't need to take anything from Mr. Werle now.

Hjalmar (*slowly and weightily*). Will you give my kind regards to your future husband, and say that I mean as soon as possible to call on Graaberg—

Gregers. What! Do you really mean to do that?

Hjalmar. To call on Graaberg, I say, and ask for an account of the sum I owe his employer. I will pay that debt of honour—ha! ha! debt of honour is a good name for it!—but enough of that. I will pay the whole sum, with five per cent. interest.

Gina. But, my dear Hjalmar, we have no money to do that with, Heaven knows!

Hjalmar. Will you tell your *fiancé* that I am working busily at my invention. Will you tell him that what keeps up my strength for this exhausting task is the

desire to be quit of a painful burden of debt. That is why I am working at this invention. The whole proceeds of it shall be devoted to freeing myself from the obligation under which your future husband's pecuniary advances have laid me.

Mrs. Sörby. Something or other has happened in this house.

Hjalmar. You are right.

Mrs. Sörby. Well—good-bye, then. I had something I wanted to talk over with you, Gina; but that must wait till another time. Good-bye! (HJALMAR *and* GREGERS *bow silently;* GINA *follows her to the door.*)

Hjalmar. Not farther than the door, Gina! (Mrs. SÖRBY *goes out;* GINA *shuts the door after her.*) There, Gregers. Now I have got that load of debt off my hands.

Gregers. Soon you will, any way.

Hjalmar. I think my attitude may be called correct.

Gregers. You are the man I always took you for.

Hjalmar. In certain cases it is impossible to overlook the claim of the ideal. As breadwinner of the family, I have to writhe and smart under this. I can tell you it is by no means a joke for a man, who is not well off, to get free from a debt of many years' standing, over which the dust of oblivion, so to speak, has collected. But that makes no difference; the manhood in me demands its rights too.

Gregers (*putting his hands on his shoulders*). Dear Hjalmar, wasn't it a good thing I came?

Hjalmar. Yes.

Gregers. Hasn't it been a good thing that you have got a clear knowledge of the whole situation?

Hjalmar (*a little impatiently*). Of course it's a good thing. But there is one thing that goes against my sense of what is right.

Gregers. What is that?

Hjalmar. It is this. I—well, I don't know whether I ought to speak so freely about your father?

Gregers. Don't think of me in the matter at all.

Hjalmar. Very well. It seems to me a very aggravat-

ing thought that now it isn't I, but he, that will realise the true marriage.

Gregers. How can you say such a thing?

Hjalmar. It certainly is so. Your father and Mrs. Sörby are entering upon a marriage which is based upon complete confidence, based upon an entire and unrestricted frankness on both sides; they conceal nothing from each other; there is no dissimulation at the back of things; they have proclaimed, if I may so express myself, a mutual forgiveness of sins.

Gregers. Well, what if they have?

Hjalmar. Well, surely that is the whole thing. That is all that this difficult position needs, to lay the foundations of a true marriage—you said so yourself.

Gregers. But this is a different thing altogether, Hjalmar. Surely you are not going to compare either you or your wife with these two—well, you know what I mean?

Hjalmar. Still I can't help feeling that in all this there is something that sorely injures my sense of justice. It looks for all the world as though there were no such thing as a just Providence at all.

Gina. Gracious, Hjalmar!—for heaven's sake don't say such a thing.

Gregers. Ahem!—I think we had better not enter into that question.

Hjalmar. But, on the other hand, I certainly seem to see the directing finger of destiny in it, all the same. He is going blind.

Gina. Perhaps it isn't certain that he is.

Hjalmar. There is no doubt he is. We ought not to doubt that he will, anyway; for it is just that very fact that constitutes the just retribution. He himself, in his time, has blinded the eyes of a credulous fellow-creature.

Gregers. Alas, he has done that to a good many!

Hjalmar. And now comes the inexorable, mysterious power, and demands this man's own eyes.

Gina. Hjalmar, how can you dare say such dreadful things! You make me all of a tremble.

Hjalmar. It is good for one sometimes to plunge

down into the dark side of life. (HEDVIG, *in her hat and coat, comes in at the outer door, breathless and looking happy.*)

Gina. Are you back again?

Hedvig. Yes, I didn't want to stay out any longer; and it was lucky I didn't, for I have just met someone at the door.

Hjalmar. Mrs. Sörby, I suppose.

Hedvig. Yes.

Hjalmar (*walking up and down*). I hope you have seen her for the last time. (*A pause.* HEDVIG, *obviously disheartened, looks first at one and then at the other of them, as if to try and read their thoughts.*)

Hedvig (*going up to her father coaxingly*). Father!

Hjalmar. Well, what is it, Hedvig?

Hedvig. Mrs. Sörby had something with her for me.

Hjalmar (*standing still*). For you?

Hedvig. Yes, it is something for to-morrow.

Gina. Bertha has always sent some little thing for her birthday.

Hjalmar. What is it?

Hedvig. You musn't know anything about it yet. Mother is to give it to me in bed the first thing to-morrow morning.

Hjalmar. All this mystery!—and I am to be kept in the dark, I suppose.

Hedvig (*quickly*). No, you may see it if you like. It is a big letter. (*Takes a letter out of the pocket of her coat.*)

Hjalmar. A letter, too?

Hedvig. She only gave me the letter. The rest of it is coming afterwards, I suppose. Just fancy—a letter! I have never had a letter before. And there is "Miss" on the envelope. (*Reads.*) "Miss Hedvig Ekdal." Think of it—that's me!

Hjalmar. Let me see the letter.

Hedvig (*giving it to him*). There you are.

Hjalmar. It is old Mr. Werle's writing.

Gina. Are you sure, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar. See for yourself.

Gina. Do you suppose I know anything about such things?

Hjalmar. Hedvig, may I open the letter—and read it?

Gina. Not to-night, Hjalmar. It is for to-morrow, you know.

Hedvig (*softly*). Oh, can't you let him read it! It is sure to be something nice, and then father will be happy and things will get pleasant again.

Hjalmar. Then I have leave to open it?

Hedvig. Yes, please, father. It will be such fun to see what it is.

Hjalmar. Very well. (*He opens the letter, takes out a paper that is in it, and reads it through with evident astonishment.*) What on earth is this?

Gina. What does it say?

Hedvig. Yes, father—do tell us.

Hjalmar. Be quiet. (*Reads it through again; he has turned pale, but collects himself.*) It is a deed of gift, Hedvig.

Hedvig. Really? What am I getting?

Hjalmar. Read it for yourself. (HEDVIG *goes to the lamp and reads.* HJALMAR *clasps his hands and says half aloud*:) The eyes! The eyes!—and then this letter.

Hedvig (*who stops reading*). Yes, but it seems to me it is grandfather who is getting it.

Hjalmar (*taking the letter from her*). Gina — can you understand this?

Gina. I know nothing whatever about it. Tell me what it is.

Hjalmar. Old Mr. Werle writes to Hedvig that her old grandfather need not bother himself with copying work any longer, but that for the future he will be entitled to five pounds a month paid from the office—

Gregers. Aha!

Hedvig. Five pounds, mother!—I read that.

Gina. How nice for grandfather!

Hjalmar. Five pounds a month, as long as he needs it; that means, naturally, till his death.

Gina. Well, then, he is provided for, poor old man.

Hjalmar. But that is not all. You didn't read the rest, Hedvig. Afterwards the gift is to be transferred to you.

Hedvig. To me! All that?

Hjalmar. You are assured the same amount for the whole of your life, it says. Do you hear that, Gina?

Gina. Yes, yes, I hear.

Hedvig. Just think of it—I am to get all that money. (*Shakes him.*) Father, father, aren't you glad.

Hjalmar (*moving away from her*). Glad! (*Walks up and down.*) What a future—what a picture it calls up to my eyes! It is Hedvig for whom he provides so liberally—Hedvig!

Gina. Yes, it's Hedvig's birthday—

Hedvig. You shall have it all the same, father! Of course I shall give all the money to you and mother.

Hjalmar. To your mother, yes! — that's just the point.

Gregers. Hjalmar, this is a trap he is laying for you.

Hjalmar. Do you think this is another trap?

Gregers. When he was here this morning, he said: "Hjalmar Ekdal is not the man you imagine he is."

Hjalmar. Not the man—!

Gregers. "You will see," he said.

Hjalmar. You will see whether I allow myself to be put off with a bribe—

Hedvig. Mother, what does it all mean?

Gina. Go away and take your things off. (HEDVIG *goes out by the kitchen door, half in tears.*)

Gregers. Yes, Hjalmar—now we shall see who is right, he or I.

Hjalmar (*tears the paper slowly across, and lays the two pieces on the table.*) That is my answer.

Gregers. That is what I expected.

Hjalmar (*goes over to Gina, who is standing by the stove, and speaks to her in a low voice*). No more lies, now. If everything was over between you and him when you—when you began to love me, as you call it, why was it that he put us in a position to marry?

Gina. I suppose he thought he would get a footing in the house.

Hjalmar. Only that? Wasn't he afraid of a certain possibility?

Gina. I don't understand what you mean.

Hjalmar. I want to know, whether—whether your child has the right to live under my roof.

Gina (*drawing herself up, with eyes flashing*). Can you ask that!

Hjalmar. You shall answer this question. Does Hedvig belong to me—or to—? Well?

Gina (*looking at him with cold bravado*). I don't know.

Hjalmar (*in a trembling voice*). You don't know?

Gina. How should I know? A woman like me—

Hjalmar (*quietly, as he turns away from her*). Then I have no longer any part in this house.

Gregers. Think well what you are doing, Hjalmar!

Hjalmar (*putting on his overcoat.*) There is nothing here for a man like me to think about.

Gregers. Indeed there is a tremendous lot here for you to think about. You three must be together, if you are going to reach the goal of self-sacrificing forgiveness.

Hjalmar. I have no desire for that. Never! Never! My hat! (*Takes his hat.*) My home has fallen into ruins round me. (*Bursts into tears.*) Gregers, I have no child now!

Hedvig (*who has opened the kitchen door*). What are you saying! (*Goes to him.*) Father! Father!

Gina. Now, what's to happen!

Hjalmar. Don't come near me, Hedvig! Go away—go away! I can't bear to see you. Ah—the eyes! Good-bye. (*Goes towards the door.*)

Hedvig (*clings to him, screaming*). No, no! Don't turn away from me.

Gina (*crying out*). Look at the child, Hjalmar! Look at the child!

Hjalmar. I won't! I can't! I must get out of here—away from all this! (*He tears himself away from* HEDVIG *and goes out by the outer door.*)

Hedvig (*with despair in her eyes*). He is going away from us, mother! He is going away! He will never come back!

Gina. Don't cry, Hedvig. Father will come back.

Hedvig (*throws herself on the sofa, sobbing*). No, no, —he will never come back any more.

Gregers. Will you believe that I meant all for the best, Mrs. Ekdal?

Gina. I almost believe you did; but, God forgive you, all the same.

Hedvig (*lying on the sofa*). I think this will kill me! What have I done to him? Mother, you *must* get him home again!

Gina. Yes, yes; only be quiet, and I will go out and look for him. (*Puts on her coat.*) Perhaps he has gone down to Relling. But, if I go, you mustn't lie there crying. Will you promise me that?

Hedvig (*sobbing convulsively*). Yes, I won't cry—if only father comes back.

Gregers (*to* GINA, *as she goes out*). Would it not be better, anyway, to let him first fight his bitter fight to the end?

Gina. He can do that afterwards. First and foremost we must get the child quiet. (*Goes out.*)

Hedvig (*sitting upright and wiping away her tears*). Now you must tell me what is the matter. Why won't father have anything to do with me any more?

Gregers. You mustn't ask that until you are a big girl and grown up.

Hedvig (*gulping down her tears*). But I can't go on being so wretchedly miserable till I am a big girl and grown up. I believe I know what it is—perhaps I am not really father's child.

Gregers (*uneasily*). How on earth could that be?

Hedvig. Mother might have found me. And now perhaps father has found that out; I have read of such things.

Gregers. Well, if even if it were so—

Hedvig. Yes, it seems to me he might love me just as much in spite of that—even more. We had the

wild duck sent us as a present, too, but all the same I love it very dearly.

Gregers (*to divert her thoughts*). The wild duck—that's true! Let's talk about the wild duck a little, Hedvig.

Hedvig. The poor wild duck!—he can't bear to look at it any more, either. Just fancy, he wanted to wring its neck.

Gregers. Oh, he won't do that.

Hedvig. No, but he said so. And I think it was so unkind of him to say so, because I say a prayer every night for the wild duck, and pray that it may be preserved from death and anything that will harm it.

Gregers (*looking at her*). Do you say your prayers at night.

Hedvig. Of course.

Gregers. Who taught you?

Hedvig. I taught myself. It was once when father was very ill and had leeches on his neck, and said he was at the point of death.

Gregers. Really?

Hedvig. So I said a prayer for him when I had got into bed—and since then I have gone on doing it.

Gregers. And now you pray for the wild duck too?

Hedvig. I thought it would be best to put the wild duck in the prayer too, because it was so sickly at first.

Gregers. Do you say prayers in the morning, too?

Hedvig. No, of course I don't.

Gregers. Why don't you say them in the morning as well?

Hedvig. Because in the morning it is light, and there is nothing more to be afraid of.

Gregers. And your father wanted to wring the neck of the wild duck that you love so dearly?

Hedvig. No, he said it would be a great pleasure to him to do it, but that he would spare it for my sake; and I think that was very nice of father.

Gregers (*coming nearer to her*). But now, suppose you sacrificed the wild duck, of your own free will, for his sake?

Hedvig (*getting up*). The wild duck?

Gregers. Suppose now you gave up for him, as a free-will offering, the dearest possession you have in the world?

Hedvig. Do you think it would help?

Gregers. Try it, Hedvig.

Hedvig (*gently, with glistening eyes*). Yes, I will try it.

Gregers. Have you really the strength of mind to do it, do you think?

Hedvig. I will ask grandfather to shoot the wild duck for me.

Gregers. Yes, do. But not a word about anything of the kind to your mother.

Hedvig. Why not?

Gregers. She doesn't understand us.

Hedvig. The wild duck! I will try it the first thing to-morrow morning. (GINA *comes in by the outer door.* HEDVIG *goes to her.*) Did you find him, mother?

Gina. No, but I heard he had gone in and taken Relling with him.

Gregers. Are you certain?

Gina. Yes, the porter's wife said so. Molvik has gone with them too she said.

Gregers. And this, when his mind is so sorely in need of fighting in solitude—!

Gina (*taking off her things*). Oh, you never know what men are going to do. Heaven knows where Relling has taken him off to! I ran over to Mrs. Eriksen's, but they weren't there.

Hedvig (*struggling with her tears*). Oh, suppose he never comes back any more!

Gregers. He'll come back. I have a message to give him in the morning, and you will see how he will come home. You may go to sleep quite hopefully about that, Hedvig. Good-night. (*Goes out.*)

Hedvig (*throws herself into* GINA'S *arms, sobbing*). Mother! Mother!

Gina (*patting her on the back and sighing*). Yes, yes, —Relling was right. This is what happens when mad folk come presenting these demands that no one can make head or tail of.

ACT V

(THE SAME SCENE.—*The cold grey light of morning is shining in; wet snow is lying on the large panes of the skylight.* GINA *comes in from the kitchen wearing a high apron and carrying a broom and a duster, and goes towards the sitting-room door. At the same moment* HEDVIG *comes hurriedly in from the passage.*)

Gina (*stopping*). Well?

Hedvig. Mother, I rather think he is downstairs with Relling—

Gina. Look at that, now!

Hedvig. Because the porter's wife said she heard two people come in with Relling when he came home last night.

Gina. That's just what I thought.

Hedvig. But that is no good if he won't come up to us.

Gina. At any rate I shall be able to go down and have a talk with him.

(*Old* EKDAL *comes in from his room, in dressing-gown and slippers and smoking his pipe.*)

Ekdal. Look here, Hjalmar—. Isn't Hjalmar at home?

Gina. No, he has gone out.

Ekdal So early? and in such a heavy snowstorm? Well, well; that's his affair. I can take my morning stroll by myself. (*He opens the attic door;* HEDVIG *helps him. He goes in, and she shuts the door after him.*)

Hedvig (*in an undertone*). Just think, mother—when poor grandfather hears that father wants to go away from us!

Gina. Nonsense—grandfather mustn't hear anything about it. It's God's mercy he wasn't here yesterday when all that rumpus was going on.

Hedvig. Yes, but—

(GREGERS *comes in by the outer door.*)

Gregers. Well? Have you any trace of him yet?

Gina. He is most likely downstairs with Relling, I am told.

Gregers. With Relling! Can he really have been out with that fellow?

Gina. That he has, evidently.

Gregers. Yes, but he—who so urgently needed solitude to pull himself seriously together—!

Gina. You may well say so.

(RELLING *comes in from the passage.*)

Hedvig (*going up to him*). Is father in your rooms?

Gina (*at the same time*). Is he there?

Relling. Certainly he is.

Hedvig. And you never told us!

Relling. Yes, I know I'm a beast. But first of all I had the other beast to keep in order—our demoniac gentleman, I mean—and after that I fell so dead asleep that—

Gina. What does Hjalmar say to-day?

Relling. He doesn't say anything at all.

Hedvig. Hasn't he talked to you at all?

Relling. Not a blessed word.

Gregers. Of course not; I can understand that very well.

Gina. But what is he doing with himself, then?

Relling. He is lying on the sofa, snoring.

Gina. Is he? Hjalmar's a fine hand at snoring.

Hedvig. Is he asleep? Can he sleep?

Relling. Well, it looks like it.

Gregers. It is easy to understand that; after the conflict of soul that has torn him—

Gina. Besides, he has never been accustomed to rambling out at night.

Hedvig. I daresay it is a good thing he is getting some sleep, mother.

Gina. I think so, too; and it would be a pity to wake him up too soon. Many thanks, Mr. Relling. Now first of all I must get the house cleaned up and tidied a bit, and then—. Come and help me, Hedvig. (*She goes with* HEDVIG *into the sitting-room.*)

Gregers (*turning to Relling*). What do you think of

the spiritual upheaval that is going on in Hjalmar Ekdal?

Relling. As far as I am concerned, I haven't noticed any spiritual upheaval going on in him at all.

Gregers. What! After such a crisis, when the whole of his life has been shifted on to a new basis? How can you suppose that a personality like Hjalmar's—

Relling. Personality!—he? Even if he ever had any tendency to any such abnormality as you call "personality," it has been absolutely rooted out of him and destroyed when he was a boy. I can assure you of that.

Gregers. It would certainly be very strange if that were true, in the case of a man brought up with such loving care as he was.

Relling. By those two crazy hysterical maiden aunts of his, do you mean?

Gregers. Let me tell you that they were women who were never oblivious to the demands of the ideal—but if I say that, you will only begin making fun of me again.

Relling. No, I am in no humour for that. Besides, I know all about them. He has delivered himself to me of any amount of rhetoric about these two "soul-mothers" of his. But I don't think he has much to thank them for. Ekdal's misfortune is that all his life he has been looked upon as a shining light in his own circle—

Gregers. And is he not that?—in profundity of mind, I mean?

Relling. I have never noticed anything of the sort. His father believed it, I daresay; the poor old lieutenant has been a simpleton all his days.

Gregers. He has been a man with a childlike mind all his days; that is a thing you can't understand.

Relling. All right! But when our dear sweet Hjalmar became a student of sorts, he was at once accepted amongst his fellow-students as the great light of the future. Good-looking he was, too, the nincompoop—pink and white—just what common girls like for a lover; and with his susceptible disposition and that sympathetic voice

of his, and the facility with which he declaimed other people's verses and other people's thoughts—

Gregers (*indignantly*). Is it Hjalmar Ekdal that you are speaking of like this?

Relling. Yes, by your leave; for that is the real man, instead of the idol you have been falling on your knees to.

Gregers. I venture to think I was not so blind as all that.

Relling. Well, it's not far from the truth, anyway. You are a sick man too, you see.

Gregers. You are right there.

Relling. Quite so. You are suffering from a complicated complaint. First of all there is that debilitating rectitudinal fever of yours; and then, what's worse, you are always in a raving delirium of hero-worship—you must always have some object of admiration that you really have no concern with.

Gregers. I certainly can only find that by looking outside of my own concerns.

Relling. But you are so monstrously mistaken as to these miraculous beings you think you find around you. This is just another case of your coming to a workman's cottage to present your "demands of the ideal"; but the people in this house are all insolvent.

Gregers. If you haven't any higher opinion of Hjalmar Ekdal than that, how can you find any pleasure in being always hand-in-glove with him?

Relling. Bless your heart—I am supposed to be a kind of doctor, though you mightn't think it; and it is only my duty to pay some attention to the poor invalids I live in the house with.

Gregers. Really! Is Hjalmar Ekdal a sick man too, then?

Relling. All the world is sick, pretty nearly—that's the worst of it.

Gregers. And what treatment are you using for Hjalmar.

Relling. My usual one. I am trying to keep up the make-believe of life in him.

Gregers. The make-believe? I don't think I heard you aright?

Relling. Yes, I said make-believe. That is the stimulating principle of life, you know.

Gregers. May I ask what sort of a make-believe enters into the scheme of Hjalmar's life?

Relling. No, you mayn't. I never disclose secrets like that to quacks. You were making an even worse mess of his case than I. My method has stood the test of trial. I have applied it in Molvik's case too. I have made a "demoniac" of him. That is the blister I have put on *his* neck.

Gregers. Isn't he a demoniac, then?

Relling. What in heaven's name do you mean by "being a demoniac"? That is only a bit of make-believe I invented to keep the life in him. If I hadn't done that, the poor honest wretch would have given way to self-contempt and despair years ago. And the same with the old lieutenant there! But he has happened to hit upon the cure by himself.

Gregers. Lieutenant Ekdal? what of him?

Relling. Well, what do you make of an old bear-stalker, like him, going into that dark attic there to shoot rabbits? There isn't a happier sportsman in the world than that poor old man playing about in there in that scrap-heap. The four or five withered Christmas trees that he has kept are the same to him as the great tall live trees in the Höidal forests; the cocks and hens are the wild-fowl in the tree-tops; and the rabbits, that lop about all over the attic floor, are the big game this famous backwoodsman used to pit himself against.

Gregers. Poor old man! Yes, he has indeed had to endure the quenching of all his youthful ideals.

Relling. And, while I think of it, Mr. Werle junior—don't use that outlandish word "ideals." There is a good home-grown word—"falsehoods."

Gregers. Do you really think the two things are the same?

Relling. Just as nearly as typhus and putrid fever are.

Gregers. Doctor Relling, I won't give in till I have rescued Hjalmar from your clutches.

Relling. So much the worse for him. If you take away make-believe from the average man, you take away his happiness as well. (*To* HEDVIG, *who has come in from the sitting-room.*) Well, little wild-duck mother, I am going down now to see whether your daddy is still lying pondering over the wonderful invention. (*Goes out by the outer door.*)

Gregers (*going up to* HEDVIG). I can see by your face that the deed isn't done yet.

Hedvig. What deed? Oh, the wild duck. No.

Gregers. Your courage failed you when the time came to do it, I suppose.

Hedvig. No, it's not that. But when I woke up early this morning and remembered all we said, it all seemed so strange to me.

Gregers. Strange?

Hedvig. Yes, I don't know—. Last night, when we were talking about it, it seemed such a splendid idea; but, after my sleep, when I remembered it again, it all seemed different.

Gregers. I see; I suppose it was impossible for you to grow up here without something being injured in you.

Hedvig. I don't care anything about that; if only father would come up, then—

Gregers. Ah, if only your eyes had been opened to what makes life worth living—if you possessed the true, happy, courageous spirit of self-sacrifice — you would see how you would be able to bring him up to you. But I have faith in you still, Hedvig. (*Goes out by the outer door.* HEDVIG *walks up and down; she is just going into the kitchen, but at the same moment a knock is heard on the attic door; she goes and opens it a little, and old* EKDAL *comes out, after which she shuts the door again.*)

Ekdal. Hm! There's not much pleasure in taking one's morning walk alone.

Hedvig. Haven't you felt inclined for any shooting, grandfather?

Ekdal. It isn't the weather for shooting to-day. Too dark in there, you can hardly see a hand's length.

Hedvig. Have you never felt inclined to shoot anything else but the rabbits?

Ekdal. Why? Aren't the rabbits good enough sport?

Hedvig. Yes, but the wild duck?

Ekdal. Ho! ho!—are you afraid I shall shoot your wild duck for you? Never in the world: I would never do that.

Hedvig. No, I suppose you couldn't; wild duck must be very hard to shoot.

Ekdal. Couldn't! I should rather think I could.

Hedvig. How would you manage it, grandfather?—not my wild duck, I mean, but with others?

Ekdal. I would see that I shot them in the breast, you know, because that is the surest place. And you must shoot against the lie of the feathers, do you understand—not with the lie of the feathers.

Hedvig. Do they die then, grandfather?

Ekdal. Certainly they do, if you shoot properly. Well, I must go in and make myself tidy. Hm!—you understand—hm! (*Goes into his room.* HEDVIG *waits a little; glances at the door, then goes to the bookcase, stands on tiptoe, and takes the pistol down from the shelf and looks at it.* GINA *comes in from the sitting-room, with her broom and duster.* HEDVIG *hastily puts down the pistol unnoticed.*)

Gina. Don't go rummaging among your father's things, Hedvig.

Hedvig (*moving away from the bookcase*). I only wanted to put things straight a little.

Gina. You had much better go into the kitchen and see if the coffee is keeping hot; I will take his tray with me, when I go down to him.

(HEDVIG *goes out.* GINA *begins to sweep and clean the studio. After a while the outer door is opened slowly, and* HJALMAR *looks in. He is wearing his overcoat, but is without his hat; he is unwashed and his hair is ruffled and untidy; his eyes are dull and heavy.* GINA *stands still with the broom in her hand and looks at him.*)

Gina. Well there, Hjalmar!—have you come after all?

Hjalmar (*walks in and answers in a dull voice*). I have come—but only to go away again directly.

Gina. Yes, yes—I suppose so. But, mercy me, what a sight you are!

Hjalmar. What a sight?

Gina. And your good overcoat too! It *has* had a doing!

Hedvig (*from the kitchen doorway*). Mother, shall I—? (*Sees* HJALMAR, *screams with joy and runs to him.*) Father! father!

Hjalmar (*turning away and waving her back*). Go away, go away! (*To* GINA.) Make her go away from me, I tell you!

Gina (*in an undertone*). Go into the sitting-room, Hedvig. (HEDVIG *goes in silently.*)

Hjalmar (*pulling out the table-drawer, with a show of being busy*). I must have my books with me. Where are my books?

Gina. What books?

Hjalmar. My scientific works, of course — the technical journals I use for my invention.

Gina (*looking in the bookcase*). Are they these unbound ones?

Hjalmar. Of course they are.

Gina (*laying a pile of magazines on the table*). Shan't I get Hedvig to cut them for you?

Hjalmar. I don't need to have them cut. (*Short silence.*)

Gina. Is it settled that you leave us, then, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar (*rummaging among the books*). I should think that was evident.

Gina. Yes, yes.

Hjalmar (*vehemently*). I can't come here and get a knife into my heart every hour of the day!

Gina. God forgive you, for saying such hard things of me.

Hjalmar. Prove to me—

Gina. I think it is you should prove to me.

Hjalmar. After a past like yours? There are certain demands—one might almost call them demands of the ideal—

Gina. But what about grandfather? What is to become of him, poor old man?

Hjalmar. I know my duty; the helpless old man will go with me. I shall go into the town and make my arrangements.—Hm—(*hesitatingly*)—has anyone found my hat on the stairs?

Gina. No. Have you lost your hat?

Hjalmar. Of course I must have had it when I came in last night, there's no doubt of that; but this morning I couldn't find it.

Gina. Good Lord!—wherever did you go with those two scamps?

Hjalmar. Don't ask silly questions. Do you suppose I am in a condition to remember details.

Gina. I only hope you haven't caught cold, Hjalmar. (*Goes into the kitchen.*)

Hjalmar (*talks to himself in an angry undertone while he empties the table drawer*). You are a scoundrel, Relling! You are a blackguard!—a shameless seducer!—I should like to murder you! (*He puts some old letters on one side, comes upon the torn paper of the day before, takes it up and looks at the pieces, but puts it down hastily as* GINA *comes in.*)

Gina (*putting down a breakfast tray on the table*). Here is a drop of something hot, if you could fancy it. And some bread and butter and a little salt meat with it.

Hjalmar (*glancing at the tray*). Salt meat? Never under this roof!—It is true I haven't tasted a bit of food for four-and-twenty hours, but that makes no difference. —My notes! The beginning of my memoirs! Where on earth are my diary and my important papers? (*Opens the sitting-room door, but draws back.*) There she is again!

Gina. Good gracious, the child must be somewhere.

Hjalmar. Come out. (*Stands aside, and* HEDVIG *comes out into the studio, looking frightened.* HJALMAR *stands with his hand on the door-handle*). In these last moments I am spending in my former home, I wish

to be protected from those who have no business here. (*Goes into the room.*)

Hedvig (*goes with a bound towards her mother and speaks in a low trembling voice*). Does he mean me?

Gina. Stay in the kitchen, Hedvig; or, no—better go into your own room. (*Talks to* HJALMAR, *as she goes in to him*). Wait a minute, Hjalmar; don't turn all the drawers upside down; I know where all the things are.

Hedvig (*stands motionless for a moment frightened and irresolute, biting her lips to keep back the tears. Then she clenches her hands convulsively and says softly:*) The wild duck! (*She creeps over and takes the pistol from the shelf, opens the attic door a little, slips in and shuts the door after her.* HJALMAR *and* GINA *are heard wrangling in the sitting room.* HJALMAR *comes out carrying some note-books and old loose papers, which he lays on the table.*)

Hjalmar. That portmanteau won't nearly hold them! There are a hundred and one things I must take with me.

Gina (*following him with the portmanteau*). Well, let the rest wait. Just take a shirt and a pair of drawers with you.

Hjalmar. Poof!—these exhausting preparations—! (*Takes off his overcoat and throws it on the sofa.*)

Gina. And there is the coffee getting all cold, too.

Hjalmar. Hm! (*Drinks a mouthful absently and then another.*)

Gina (*dusting the backs of the chairs*). You will have a job to find another big attic like this for the rabbits.

Hjalmar. What! Have I got to take all the rabbits with me too?

Gina. Yes, grandfather can't live without his rabbits, I am sure.

Hjalmar. He will have to get accustomed to it. I have got to renounce what is of a deal more vital importance than rabbits.

Gina (*dusting the bookcase*). Shall I put your flute in the portmanteau for you?

Hjalmar. No. No flute for me. But give me the pistol.

Gina. Are you going to take that there gun with you?

Hjalmar. Yes. My loaded pistol.

Gina (*looking for it*). It isn't here. He must have taken it in with him.

Hjalmar. Is he in the attic?

Gina. No doubt he is.

Hjalmar. Hm—poor lonely old fellow. (*Takes a piece of bread and butter, eats it and drinks up his cup of coffee.*)

Gina. If only we hadn't let our other room, you might have moved in there.

Hjalmar. I should be living under the same roof with—! Never—never!

Gina. But couldn't you put up for a day or two in the sitting-room? You should have it all to yourself.

Hjalmar. Never within these walls.

Gina. Well, then, downstairs, with Relling and Molvik?

Hjalmar. Don't mention those fellows' names! The very thought of them almost takes my appetite away. No, no—I must go out into the storm and snow—go from house to house seeking shelter for my father and myself.

Gina. But you have no hat, Hjalmar! You know you have lost your hat.

Hjalmar. Oh, those scum of the earth, steeped in every vice!—I must get a hat as I go. (*Takes another piece of bread and butter.*) I must make the necessary arrangements. I am not going to endanger my life. (*Searches for something on the tray.*)

Gina. What are you looking for?

Hjalmar. Butter.

Gina. I will get some in a moment. (*Goes into the kitchen.*)

Hjalmar (*calling after her*). Oh, it's of no consequence. Dry bread will do just as well for me.

Gina (*bringing in a butter-dish*). See, this is fresh churned.

(*She pours out another cup of coffee for him; he sits down on the sofa, puts more butter on his bread, and eats and drinks for a little while in silence.*)

Hjalmar. If I decided to do so, could I—without being exposed to intrusion on anyone's part—put up for a day or two in the sitting-room there?

Gina. Of course you could, if only you would.

Hjalmar. Because I don't see there is any possibility of getting all father's things out in a moment.

Gina. And, besides that, you have got to tell him first that you don't mean to live here with us any longer.

Hjalmar (*pushing his cup away.*) Yes, that's another thing; I have got to open up all this complicated question again—I must consider the situation; I must have time to breathe; I cannot sustain all these burdens in a single day.

Gina. No, and in such vile weather as it is, too.

Hjalmar (*turning over* Mr. WERLE'S *letter*). I see this paper is still lying here.

Gina. Yes, I haven't touched it.

Hjalmar. The rubbish is no concern of mine—

Gina. Well, I am sure *I* had no idea of doing anything with it.

Hjalmar. But it might be as well not to let it get out of sight altogether. In all the upset of my moving, it might so easily—

Gina. I'll take care of it, Hjalmar.

Hjalmar. The deed of gift, after all, belongs first and foremost to my father, and it is his affair whether he chooses to make any use of it.

Gina (*sighing*). Yes, poor old father.

Hjalmar. Just for the sake of safety—where can I find some paste?

Gina (*going to the book-shelf*). Here is the paste-pot.

Hjalmar. And a brush.

Gina. Here is a brush too. (*Brings them to him.*)

Hjalmar (*taking up a pair of scissors.*) Just a strip of paper along the back—. (*Cuts and pastes.*) Far be it from me to want to do anything amiss with other people's property—least of all with what belongs to a poor old man—and, indeed, to someone else as well. There we are! Let it lie there for a little. And when it is dry,

take it away. I don't wish ever to set eyes on the paper again. Never!

(GREGERS WERLE *comes in from the passage.*)

Gregers (*slightly astonished*). What—are you sitting here, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar (*getting up hurriedly.*) I had sunk down from exhaustion.

Gregers. You have been having some breakfast, I see.

Hjalmar. The body makes its claims felt sometimes, too.

Gregers. What have you decided to do?

Hjalmar. For a man like me, there is only one thing to be done. I am just engaged in putting my most important things together. But it takes time, as you may suppose.

Gina (*a little impatiently*). Well, am I to get the room ready for you, or pack your portmanteau?

Hjalmar (*with a glance of irritation towards* GREGERS). Pack—and get the room ready as well!

Gregers (*after a short pause*). I should never have thought this would be the end of it. Is there really any necessity for you to leave house and home?

Hjalmar (*walking about uneasily*). What do you want me to do, then?—I am not fit to stand unhappiness, Gregers. I need a sense of security and peace about me.

Gregers. But can't you have that here? Just make the trial. It seems to me that now you have firm ground to build upon—and to begin afresh. Remember, too, you have your invention to live for.

Hjalmar. Oh, don't talk to me about my invention. I shouldn't wonder if that were a very long way off.

Gregers. Really?

Hjalmar. Good heavens! Yes. Just tell me what you suppose I am going to invent? Other people have invented most things already. It becomes harder every day—

Gregers. But you, who have worked so hard at it—

Hjalmar. It was that scoundrel Relling who set me on to it.

Gregers. Relling?

Hjalmar. Yes, it was he that first called my attention to my talent for making some remarkable discovery in photography.

Gregers. Aha!—it was Relling!

Hjalmar. I got so much happiness out of it, Gregers. Not so much for the sake of the invention itself, as because Hedvig believed in it—believed in it with a child's whole-hearted enthusiasm. Perhaps I should say that I have been fool enough to go and fancy she believed in it.

Gregers. Can you really suppose that Hedvig has not been genuine about it?

Hjalmar. I can suppose anything now. It is Hedvig that stands in my way. She has taken all the sunshine out of my life.

Gregers. Hedvig? Can you say that of Hedvig? How can she have done anything of the sort?

Hjalmar (*without answering him*). How unspeakably I have loved that child! How unspeakably happy I have felt every time I came home into my poor room, and she ran to meet me with her sweet little half-closed eyes!—Credulous fool! I loved her so unspeakably, that I deluded myself with the dream that she loved me just as much.

Gregers. Do you say that was a delusion?

Hjalmar. How can I tell? I can get nothing whatever out of Gina, and she is so utterly lacking in any sense of the ideal side of all these complications. But to you I feel forced to open my mind, Gregers. There is that terrible doubt—perhaps Hedvig has never really honestly loved me.

Gregers. It is possible you may have proof of that. (*Listens.*) What is that? I thought I heard the wild duck cry.

Hjalmar. It is the wild duck quacking. Father is in the attic.

Gregers. Is he? (*A look of happiness lights up his face.*) I tell you, you may have proof yet that your poor misunderstood Hedvig loves you.

Hjalmar. What proof can she give me? I daren't believe in any assurances from that quarter.

Gregers. There is not an atom of deceitfulness in Hedvig.

Hjalmar. Ah, Gregers, that is just what I am not so certain about. Who knows what Gina and that Mrs. Sörby may have sat here whispering and gossiping about? And Hedvig is generally all ears, I can tell you. Perhaps the deed of gift did not come so unexpectedly, after all. Indeed, I thought I noticed something.

Gregers. What sort of spirit is this that has taken hold of you?

Hjalmar. I have had my eyes opened. Just you wait. You will see the deed of gift is only a beginning. Mrs. Sörby has all along been very thick with Hedvig, and now she has it in her power to do whatever she pleases for the child. They can take her from me whenever they like.

Gregers. Hedvig will never leave you.

Hjalmar. Don't be so sure of that. If they come beckoning to her with their hands full of gifts—. And I have loved her so unspeakably! I, who would have thought it my greatest joy to take her carefully by the hand and lead her through life—just as one leads a child, who is frightened of the dark, through a great empty room! Now I feel such a gnawing certainty that the poor photographer, up in his garret here, has never really and truly been anything to her. She has only been cunningly careful to keep on a good footing with me till the time came.

Gregers. You don't really believe that, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar. That is just the cruellest part of it—that I don't know what to believe—and that I never shall know. But can you really doubt that it is as I say? Ha! ha! You rely far too much on your "demands of the ideal," my good Gregers! If the others were to come, with their hands full, and call to the child: "Come away from him: you will learn what life is with us—"

Gregers (hastily). Well, what then, do you suppose?

Hjalmar. If I asked her then: "Hedvig, are you

willing to give up this life they offer you, for my sake?" (*Laughs derisively.*) Thank you!—you would just hear what answer I should get.

(*A pistol shot is heard from within the attic.*)

Gregers (*with a happy shout*). Hjalmar!

Hjalmar. Listen to that. He must needs go shooting too.

Gina (*coming in*). Hjalmar, I think grandfather is blundering about in the attic by himself.

Hjalmar. I will look in—

Gregers (*quickly and with emotion*). Wait a moment! Do you know what that was?

Hjalmar. Of course I know.

Gregers. No, but you don't. I know. That was the proof you wanted!

Hjalmar. What proof?

Gregers. That was a child's act of sacrifice. She has got your father to shoot the wild duck.

Hjalmar. Shoot the wild duck!

Gina. Fancy that, now!

Hjalmar. What for?

Gregers. She wanted to sacrifice, for your sake, what she prized most in the world; because she believed it would make you love her again.

Hjalmar (*tenderly with emotion*). Poor child!

Gina. What things she thinks of!

Gregers. She only wanted your love again, Hjalmar; she did not feel as if she could live without it.

Gina (*struggling with her tears*). There you are, Hjalmar!

Hjalmar. Gina, where is she?

Gina (*sniffing*). Poor thing, she is sitting out in the kitchen, I expect.

Hjalmar (*crosses the room and opens the kitchen door*). Hedvig—come! Come here to me! (*Looks round.*) No, she is not there.

Gina. Then she must be in her own little room.

Hjalmar (*who has gone out to look*). No, she is not here either. (*Comes in.*) She must have gone out.

Gina. Yes, you wouldn't have her anywhere in the house.

Hjalmar. If only she would come home soon, so that I could let her know—. Everything will go well now, Gregers; now I believe we can begin life over again.

Gregers (*quietly*). I knew it was through the child that reparation would be made.

(*Old* EKDAL *comes to the door of his room; he is in full uniform, and is occupied in trying to buckle on his sword.*)

Hjalmar (*in astonishment*). Father! are you there!

Gina. Was it in your own room that you fired?

Ekdal (*indignantly as he approaches*). So you go shooting alone, do you, Hjalmar?

Hjalmar (*anxious and perplexed*). Wasn't it you, then, that was shooting in the attic?

Ekdal. I shooting? Hm!

Gregers (*calls to Hjalmar*). She has shot the wild duck herself, don't you see?

Hjalmar. What can it mean! (*Hurries to the attic door, tears it aside, looks in, and gives a loud scream.*) Hedvig!

Gina (*running to the door*). Heavens! what is it?

Hjalmar (*going in*). She is lying on the floor!

Gregers. Hedvig on the floor! (*Goes in to Hjalmar.*)

Gina (*at the same time*). Hedvig! (*From within the garret.*) Oh, no! no! no!

Ekdal. Ho! ho! does she go out shooting too!

(HJALMAR, GINA *and* GREGERS *carry* HEDVIG *into the studio; the pistol is clasped tight in the fingers of her right hand, which is hanging down.*)

Hjalmar (*distractedly*). The pistol has gone off—and she has been shot. Call for help! Help!

Gina (*runs into the passage and calls out*). Relling! Relling! Doctor Relling! come up as quickly as ever you can! (HJALMAR *and* GREGERS *lay* HEDVIG *on the sofa.*)

Ekdal (*quietly*). The forests avenge themselves.

Hjalmar (*on his knees beside* HEDVIG). She is coming to now. She is coming to—yes, yes, yes.

Gina (*who has come in again.*) Where has she been shot? I can't see anything. (*Relling comes in hurriedly with* MOLVIK *at his heels; the latter is without waistcoat or necktie, and with his coat flying open.*)

Relling. What is the matter?

Gina. They say Hedvig has shot herself.

Hjalmar. Come here and help!

Relling. Shot herself! (*Pushes the table aside and begins to examine her.*)

Hjalmar (*looking anxiously up at him*). It can't be dangerous, Relling? What? She hardly bleeds at all. It can't be dangerous?

Relling. How did it happen?

Hjalmar. I can't imagine—!

Gina. She wanted to shoot the wild duck.

Relling. The wild duck?

Hjalmar. The pistol must have gone off.

Relling. Hm! Quite so.

Ekdal. The forests avenge themselves. But I am not afraid, anyway. (*Goes into the attic and shuts the door after him.*)

Hjalmar. Well, Relling—why don't you say something?

Relling. The ball has entered the breast.

Hjalmar. Yes—but she's coming to!

Gina (*bursting into tears*). My child, my child!

Gregers (*in a choked voice*). In the ocean's depths—

Hjalmar (*springing up*). Yes, yes, she *must* live! Oh, for God's sake, Relling—just for a moment—just long enough for me to let her know how unspeakably I have loved her all the time!

Relling. The heart has been hit. Internal hæmorrhage. She died on the spot.

Hjalmar. And I hunted her away from me! And she crept like a frightened animal into the attic and died for love of me. (*Sobbing.*) I can never make it right now! I can never tell her—! (*Clenches his fists and cries up to heaven.*) Thou who art there above us—if indeed Thou *art* there! Why hast Thou done this to me!

Gina. Hush, hush! you mustn't take on in that terrible way. We had no right to keep her, I suppose.

Molvik. The child is not dead, but sleepeth.

Relling. Rubbish!

Hjalmar (*goes more calmly over to the sofa and, folding his arms, looks down at* HEDVIG). There she lies, so stiff and still.

Relling (*trying to take the pistol from her fingers*). She holds so tight, so tight.

Gina. No, no, Relling, don't hurt her fingers; let the thing alone.

Hjalmar. She shall take it with her.

Gina. Yes, let her. But the child mustn't lie out here for a show. She shall go into her own little room, she shall. Carry her with me, Hjalmar. (*She and* HJALMAR *take her up.*)

Hjalmar (*as they carry her out*). Oh, Gina, Gina—can you ever get over this?

Gina. We must help one another. Now, I think, we each have a share in her.

Molvik (*stretches out his arms and babbles*). Blessed be the Lord! Earth to earth, dust to dust—

Relling (*whispering*). Shut up, you fool—you're drunk.

(HJALMAR *and* GINA *carry the body out through the kitchen.* RELLING *stands looking after them.* MOLVIK *sneaks out into the passage.*)

Relling (*going over to Gregers*). No one will ever persuade me this was an accident.

Gregers (*who has stood terror-stricken, his face twitching convulsively*). No one can say how the dreadful thing happened.

Relling. The flame has scorched her dress. She must have held the pistol to her breast and fired.

Gregers. Hedvig has not died in vain. You saw how his grief called out all the best that was in him.

Relling. Most people show their best side in the presence of death. But how long do you suppose this turn for the better will last in his case?

Gregers. Surely it will last and increase as long as he lives!

o

Relling. In eight or nine months little Hedvig will be no more to him than a beautiful theme to declaim upon.

Gregers. Do you dare to say that of Hjalmar Ekdal?

Relling. We will talk of it again as soon as the grass has grown over her grave. Then you will hear him pumping up his fine phrases about "the child torn prematurely from her father's loving heart"; you will see him wallowing in emotional fits of self-admiration and self-compassion. Just you wait and see!

Gregers. If you are right, and I am wrong, life is no longer worth living.

Relling. Oh, life would be all right if we could only be rid of these infernal fools who come to poor people's doors presenting their "demands of the ideal."

Gregers (*looking in front of him*). If that is so, I am glad my destiny is what it is.

Relling. Excuse me, but—what *is* your destiny?

Gregers (*turning to go*). To be the thirteenth at table.

Relling. So I should imagine!

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Doctor Wangel.
Ellida Wangel, his second wife.
Bolette, Hilde (not yet grown up) } his daughters by his first wife.
Arnholm (second master at a college).
Lyngstrand.
Ballested.
A Stranger.
Young People of the Town.
Tourists.
Visitors.

(*The action takes place in a small fjord town, Northern Norway.*)

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

ACT I

(SCENE.—DOCTOR WANGEL'S *house. with a large verandah Garden in front of and around the house. Under the verandah a flagstaff. In the garden an arbour, with table and chairs. Hedge, with small gate at the back. Beyond a road along the seashore. An avenue of trees along the road. Between the trees are seen the fjord, high mountain ranges and peaks. A warm and brilliantly clear summer morning.*

BALLESTED, *middle-aged, wearing an old velvet jacket, and a broad-brimmed artist's hat, stands under the flagstaff, arranging the ropes. The flag is lying on the ground. A little way from him an easel, with an outspread canvas. By the easel on a camp-stool, brushes, a palette, and box of colours.*

BOLETTE WANGEL *comes from the room opening on the verandah. She carries a large vase with flowers which she puts down on the table.*)

Bolette. Well, Ballested, does it work smoothly?

Ballested. Certainly, Miss Bolette, that's easy enough. May I ask—do you expect any visitors to-day?

Bolette. Yes, we're expecting Mr Arnholm this morning. He got to town in the night.

Ballested. Arnholm? Wait a minute—wasn't Arnholm the man who was tutor here several years ago?

Bolette. Yes, it is he.

Ballested. Oh, really! Is he coming into these parts again?

Bolette. That's why we want to have the flag up.

Ballested. Well, that's reasonable enough.

(BOLETTE *goes into the room again. A little after* LYNGSTRAND *enters from the road and stands still, interested by the easel and painting gear. He is a slender youth, poorly but carefully dressed, and looks delicate.*)

Lyngstrand (*on the other side of the hedge*). Good-morning.

Ballested (*turning round*). Hallo! Good-morning. (*Hoists up flag*). That's it! Up goes the balloon. (*Fastens the ropes, and then busies himself about the easel.*) Good-morning, my dear sir. I really don't think I've the pleasure of—

Lyngstrand. I'm sure you're a painter.

Ballested. Of course I am. Why shouldn't I be?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I can see you are. May I take the liberty of coming in a moment?

Ballested. Would you like to come in and see?

Lyngstrand. I should like to immensely.

Ballested. Oh! there's nothing much to see yet. But come in. Come a little closer.

Lyngstrand. Many thanks. (*Comes in through the garden gate*).

Ballested (*painting*). It's the fjord there between the islands I'm working at.

Lyngstrand. So I see.

Ballested. But the figure is still wanting. There's not a model to be got in this town.

Lyngstrand. Is there to be a figure, too?

Ballested. Yes. Here by the rocks in the foreground a mermaid is to lie, half-dead?

Lyngstrand. Why is she to be half-dead?

Ballested. She has wandered hither from the sea, and can't find her way out again. And so, you see, she lies there dying in the brackish water.

Lyngstrand. Ah, I see.

Ballested. The mistress of this house put it into my head to do something of the kind.

Lyngstrand. What shall you call the picture when it's finished?

Ballested. I think of calling it "The Mermaid's End."

Lyngstrand. That's capital! You're sure to make something fine of it.

Ballested (*looking at him*). In the profession too, perhaps?

Lyngstrand. Do you mean a painter?

Ballested. Yes.

Lyngstrand. No, I'm not that; but I'm going to be a sculptor. My name is Hans Lyngstrand.

Ballested. So you're to be a sculptor? Yes, yes; the art of sculpture is a nice, pretty art in its way. I fancy I've seen you in the street once or twice. Have you been staying here long?

Lyngstrand. No; I've only been here a fortnight. But I shall try to stop till the end of the summer.

Ballested. For the bathing?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I wanted to see if I could get a little stronger.

Ballested. Not delicate, surely?

Lyngstrand. Yes, perhaps I am a little delicate; but it's nothing dangerous. Just a little tightness on the chest.

Ballested. Tush!—a bagatelle! You should consult a good doctor.

Lyngstrand. Yes, I thought of speaking to Doctor Wangel one of these times.

Ballested. You should. (*Looks out to the left.*) There's another steamer, crowded with passengers. It's really marvellous how travelling has increased here of late years.

Lyngstrand. Yes, there's a good deal of traffic here, I think.

Ballested. And lots of summer visitors come here too. I often fear our good town will lose its individuality with all these foreign goings on.

Lyngstrand. Were you born in the town?

Ballested. No; but I have accla—acclimatised myself. I feel united to the place by the bonds of time and habit.

Lyngstrand. Then you've lived here a long time?

Ballested. Well—about seventeen or eighteen years. I came here with Skive's Dramatic Company. But then we got into difficulties, and so the company broke up and dispersed in all directions.

Lyngstrand. But you yourself remained here?

Ballested. I remained, and I've done very well. I

was then working chiefly as decorative artist, don't you know.

(BOLETTE *comes out with a rocking-chair, which she places on the verandah.*)

Bolette (*speaking into the room*). Hilde, see if you can find the embroidered footstool for father.

Lyngstrand (*going up to the verandah, bows*). Good-morning, Miss Wangel.

Bolette (*by the balustrade*). What! Is it you, Mr. Lyngstrand? Good-morning. Excuse me one moment, I'm only— (*Goes into room*).

Ballested. Do you know the family?

Lyngstrand. Not well. I've only met the young ladies now and again in company; and I had a chat with Mrs. Wangel the last time we had music up at the "View." She said I might come and see them.

Ballested. Now, do you know, you ought to cultivate their acquaintance.

Lyngstrand. Yes; I'd been thinking of paying a visit. Just a sort of call. If only I could find some excuse—

Ballested. Excuse! Nonsense! (*looking out to the left.*) Damn it! (*Gathering his things.*) The steamer's by the pier already. I must get off to the hotel. Perhaps some of the new arrivals may want me. For I'm a hairdresser, too, don't you know.

Lyngstrand. You are certainly very many-sided, sir.

Ballested. In small towns one has to try to acclam—acclimatise oneself in various branches. If you should require anything in the hair line—a little pomatum or such like—you've only to ask for Dancing-master Ballested.

Lyngstrand. Dancing-master!

Ballested. President of the "Wind Band Society," by your leave. We've a concert on this evening up at the "View." Good-bye, good-bye!

(*He goes out with his painting gear through the garden gate.* HILDE *comes out with the footstool.* BOLETTE *brings more flowers.* LYNGSTRAND *bows to* HILDE *from the garden below.*)

Hilde (*by the balustrade, not returning his bow*). Bolette said you had ventured in to-day.

Lyngstrand. Yes; I took the liberty of coming in for a moment.

Hilde. Have you been out for a morning walk?

Lyngstrand. Oh, no! nothing came of the walk this morning.

Hilde. Have you been bathing, then?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I've been in the water a little while. I saw your mother down there. She was going into her bathing-machine.

Hilde. Who was?

Lyngstrand. Your mother.

Hilde. Oh! I see. (*She puts the stool in front of the rocking-chair.*)

Bolette (*interrupting*). Didn't you see anything of father's boat out on the fjord?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I thought I saw a sailing-boat that was steering inland.

Bolette. I'm sure that was father. He's been to visit patients on the islands. (*She is arranging things on the table.*)

Lyngstrand (*taking a step up the stairs to the verandah*). Why, how everything's decorated here with flowers!

Bolette. Yes; doesn't it look nice?

Lyngstrand. It looks lovely! It looks as if it were some festival day in the house.

Hilde. That's exactly what it is.

Lyngstrand. I might have guessed it! I'm sure it's your father's birthday.

Bolette (*warningly to* HILDE). Hm—hm!

Hilde (*taking no notice of her*). No, mother's.

Lyngstrand. Oh! your mother's!

Bolette (*in low voice, angrily*). Really, Hilde!

Hilde (*the same*). Let me be! (*To* LYNGSTRAND.) I suppose you're going home to breakfast now?

Lyngstrand (*going down steps*). Yes, I suppose I must go and get something to eat.

Hilde. I'm sure you find the living very good at the hotel!

Lyngstrand. I'm not staying at the hotel now. It was too expensive for me.

Hilde. Where are you staying, then?

Lyngstrand. I'm staying up at Mrs. Jensen's.

Hilde. What Mrs. Jensen's?

Lyngstrand. The midwife.

Hilde. Excuse me, Mr. Lyngstrand, but I really have other matters to attend to—

Lyngstrand. Oh! I'm sure I ought not to have said that.

Hilde. Said what?

Lyngstrand. What I said.

Hilde (*looking contemptuously at him*). I don't understand you in the least.

Lyngstrand. No, no. But I must say good-bye for the present.

Bolette (*comes forward to the steps*). Good-bye, good-bye, Mr. Lyngstrand. You must excuse us now. But another day—when you've plenty of time—and inclination—you really must come in and see father and the rest of us.

Lyngstrand. Yes; thanks, very much. I shall be delighted.

(*Bows, and goes out through the garden gate. As he goes along the road he bows again towards the verandah.*)

Hilde (*in low voice*). Adieu, Monsieur! Please remember me to Mother Jensen.

Bolette (*in a low voice, shaking her arm*). Hilde! You naughty child! Are you quite crazy? He might have heard you.

Hilde. Pshaw! Do you think I care about *that?*

Bolette (*looking out to the right.*) Here's father!

(WANGEL, *in travelling dress and carrying a small bag, comes from the footpath.*)

Wangel. See! I'm back again, little girls! (*He enters through the garden gate.*)

Bolette (*going towards him at the bottom of the garden*). Oh! It is delightful that you've come!

Hilde (*also going up to him*). Now have you got off for the whole day, father?

Wangel. Oh! no. I must go down to the office for a little while presently. I say—do you know if Arnholm has come?

Bolette. Yes; he arrived in the night. We sent to the hotel to enquire.

Wangel. Then you've not seen him yet?

Bolette. No; but he's sure to come here this morning.

Wangel. Yes; he's sure to do that.

Hilde (*pulling him*). Father, now you must look round.

Wangel (*looking towards the verandah*). Yes, I see well enough, child. It's quite festive.

Bolette. Now, don't you think we've arranged it nicely?

Wangel. I must say you have. Are—are we alone at home now?

Hilde. Yes; she's gone to—

Bolette (*interrupting quickly*). Mother has gone to bathe.

Wangel (*looks lovingly at* BOLETTE, *and pats her head. Then he says, hesitating*:) Look here, little ones. Do you want to keep this up all day? And the flag hoisted, too?

Hilde. Surely you understand that, father!

Wangel. Hm! Yes; but you see—

Bolette (*looks at him and nods*). Surely you can understand we've been doing all this in honour of Mr. Arnholm. When such a good friend comes to see you for the first time—

Hilde (*smiling, and shaking him*). Think! he who used to be Bolette's tutor, father!

Wangel (*with a half smile*). You're a pair of sly minxes. Well—good heavens—after all, it's but natural we should remember her who is no more with us. Here, Hilde (*Gives her his bag*), take that down to the office. No, children. I don't like this—the way, I mean. This habit of every year—well—what can one say? I suppose it can't be managed any other way.

Hilde (*about to go out of garden, and, with the bag, stops short, turns, and points out*). Look at that gentleman coming up here. I'm sure it's your tutor.

Bolette (*looks in that direction*). He? (*Laughs*). That is good! Do you think that middle-aged fellow is Arnholm?

Wangel. Wait a moment, child. Why, by Jove, I do believe it is he. Yes, it certainly is.

Bolette (*staring at him in quiet amazement*). Yes; I almost think—

(ARNHOLM, *in elegant morning dress, with gold spectacles, and a thin cane, comes along the road. He looks over-worked. He looks in at the garden, bows in friendly fashion, and enters by the garden gate.*)

Wangel (*going to meet him*). Welcome, dear Arnholm! Heartily welcome back to your old quarters again!

Arnholm. Thanks, thanks, Doctor Wangel. A thousand thanks. (*They shake hands and walk up the garden together.*) And there are the children! (*Holds out his hands and looks at them.*) I should hardly have known these two again.

Wangel. No, I believe you.

Arnholm. And yet—perhaps Bolette—yes, I should have known Bolette again.

Wangel. Hardly, I think. Why, it is eight—nine years since you saw her. Ah, yes! Many a thing has changed here meanwhile.

Arnholm (*looking round*). I really don't see it; except that the trees have grown remarkably, and that you've set up that arbour.

Wangel. Oh! no—outwardly.

Arnholm (*smiling*). And then, of course, you've two grown-up daughters here now.

Wangel. Grown up! Well, there's only one grown up.

Hilde (*aside*). Just listen to father!

Wangel. But now let's sit down up there on the verandah. It's cooler than here. Won't you?

Arnholm. Thanks, thanks, dear doctor.

(*They go up.* WANGEL *motions him to the rocking-chair.*)

Wangel. That's right! Now make yourself comfortable, and rest, for you seem rather tired after your journey.

Arnholm. Oh, that's nothing. Here, amid these surroundings—

Bolette (*to* WANGEL). Hadn't we better have some soda and syrup in the sitting-room? It's sure to be too hot out here soon.

Wangel. Yes, girls. Let's have some soda and syrup, and perhaps a drop of Cognac, too.

Bolette. Cognac, too!

Wangel. Just a little, in case anyone should like some.

Bolette. All right. Hilde, go down to the office with the bag.

(*Bolette goes into the room, and closes the door after her.* HILDE *takes the bag, and goes through the garden to the back of the house.*)

Arnholm (*who has followed Bollette with his eyes*). What a splendid—. They are both splendid girls, who've grown up here for you.

Wangel (*sitting down*). Yes; you think so, too?

Arnholm. Why, it's simply amazing, how Bolette!—and Hilde, too! But now, you yourself, dear doctor. Do you think of staying here all your life?

Wangel. Yes; I suppose so. Why, I've been born and bred here, so to say. I lived here so very happily with—her who left us so early—she whom you knew when you were here before, Arnholm.

Arnholm. Yes, yes!

Wangel. And now I live here so happily with her who has taken her place. Ah! On the whole, fate has been very good to me.

Arnholm. You have no children by your second marriage?

Wangel. We had a little boy, two—two and a half years ago. But he didn't stay long. He died when he was four—five months old.

Arnholm. Isn't your wife at home to day.

Wangel. Oh, yes. She's sure to be here soon. She's

down there bathing. She does so every blessed day no matter what the weather.

Arnholm. Is she ill, then?

Wangel. Not exactly ill, although she has been extremely nervous for the last few years—that is to say she is now and then. I can't make out what really ails her. But to plunge into the sea is her joy and delight.

Arnholm. Yes: I remember that of old.

Wangel (*with an almost imperceptible smile*). To be sure! You knew Ellida when you were teacher out there at Skjoldviken.

Arnholm. Certainly. She used often to visit at the Parsonage. But I mostly met her when I went to the lighthouse to see her father.

Wangel. Those times out there, you may believe me, have set deep marks upon her. The people in the town here can't understand her at all. They call her the "Lady from the Sea."

Arnholm. Do they?

Wangel. Yes. And so—now you see, speak to her of the old days, dear Arnholm, it will do her good.

Arnholm (*looks at him in doubt*). Have you any reason for thinking so?

Wangel. Assuredly I have.

Ellida (*her voice is heard outside the garden.*) Are you there, Wangel?

Wangel (*rising*). Yes, dear.

(MRS. ELLIDA WANGEL, *in a large, light wrap, and with wet hair hanging loose over her shoulders, comes from between the trees of the arbour.* ARNHOLM *rises.*)

Wangel (*smiling, and holding out his hands to her*). Ah! So now we have our Mermaid!

Ellida (*goes quickly up the verandah, and seizes his hands*). Thank God that I see you again! When did you come?

Wangel. Just now; a little while since. (*Pointing to* ARNHOLM.) But won't you greet an old acquaintance?

Ellida (*holding out her hand to* ARNHOLM). So here

you are! Welcome! And forgive me for not being at home—

Arnholm. Don't mention it—don't stand on any ceremony.

Wangel. Was the water nice and fresh to-day?

Ellida. Fresh! Oh! The water here never is fresh. It is so tepid and lifeless. Ugh! The water in the fjord here is sick.

Arnholm. Sick?

Ellida. Yes, sick. And I believe it makes one sick, too.

Wangel (*smiling*). You're giving our bathing resort a good name!

Arnholm. I should rather believe, Mrs. Wangel, that you have a peculiar relation to the sea, and to all that belongs to it.

Ellida. Perhaps; I almost think so myself. But do you see how festively the girls have arranged everything in your honour?

Wangel (*embarrassed*). Hm! (*Looks at his watch.*) Well, I suppose I must be quick and—

Arnholm. Is it really for me?

Ellida. Yes. You may be sure we don't decorate like this every day. Ugh! How suffocatingly hot it is under this roof. (*Goes down into garden.*) Come over here. Here at least there is a little air. (*Sits down in arbour.*)

Arnholm (*going thither*). I think the air quite fresh here.

Ellida. Yes, you—who are used to the stifling air of the town! It's terrible there in the summer, I hear.

Wangel (*who has also gone into the garden*). Hm, dear Ellida, you must just entertain our friend alone for a little while.

Ellida. Are you busy?

Wangel. Yes, I must go down to the office. And then I must change. But I won't be long.

Arnholm (*sitting down in arbour*). Now, don't hurry, dear doctor. Your wife and I will manage to kill the time.

Wangel (*nodding*). Oh, yes! I'm sure you will. Well, good-bye for the present. (*He goes out through the garden.*)

Ellida (*after a short pause*). Don't you think it's pleasant sitting out here?

Arnholm. I think I've a pleasant seat now.

Ellida. They call this my arbour, because I had it fitted up, or rather Wangel did for me.

Arnholm. And you usually sit here?

Ellida. Yes, I pass most of the day here.

Arnholm. With the girls, I suppose?

Ellida. No, the girls—usually sit on the verandah.

Arnholm. And Wangel himself?

Ellida. Oh! Wangel goes too and fro—now he comes to me, and then he goes to his children.

Arnholm. And is it you who wish this?

Ellida. I think all parties feel most comfortable in this way. You know we can talk across to one another—if we happen to find there is anything to say.

Arnholm (*after thinking awhile*). When I last crossed your path—out at Skjoldviken, I mean—Hm! That is long ago now.

Ellida. It's quite ten years since you were there with us.

Arnholm. Yes, about that. But when I think of you out there in the lighthouse! The heathen, as the old clergyman called you, because your father had named you, as he said, after an old ship, and hadn't given you a name fit for a Christian.

Ellida. Well, what then?

Arnholm. The last thing I should then have believed was that I should see you again down here as the wife of Wangel.

Ellida. No; at that time Wangel wasn't—at that time the girls' first mother was still living. Their real mother, so—

Arnholm. Of course, of course! But even if that had not been—even if he had been free—still, I could never have believed this would come about.

Ellida. Nor I. Never on earth—then.

Arnholm. Wangel is such a good fellow. So honourable. So thoroughly good and kind to all men.

Ellida (*warmly and heartily*). Yes, he is indeed.

Arnholm. But he must be so absolutely different from you, I fancy.

Ellida. You are right there. So he is.

Arnholm. Well, but how did it happen? How did it come about?

Ellida. Ah! dear Arnholm, you mustn't ask me about that. I couldn't explain it to you, and even if I could, you would never be able to understand, in the least.

Arnholm. Hm! (*In lower tone.*) Have you ever confided anything about me to your husband? Of course, I mean about the useless step—I allowed myself to be moved to.

Ellida. No. You may be sure of that. I've not said a word to him about—about what you speak of.

Arnholm. I am glad. I felt rather awkward at the thought that—

Ellida. There was no need. I have only told him what is true—that I liked you very much, and that you were the truest and best friend I had out there.

Arnholm. Thanks for that. But tell me—why did you never write to me after I had gone away?

Ellida. I thought that perhaps it would pain you to hear from one who—who could not respond as you desired. It seemed like re-opening a painful subject.

Arnholm. Hm. Yes, yes, perhaps you were right.

Ellida. But why didn't you write?

Arnholm (*looks at her and smiles, half reproachfully*). I make the first advance? Perhaps expose myself to the suspicion of wanting to begin all over again? After such a repulse as I had had?

Ellida. Oh no! I understand very well. Have you never since thought of forming any other tie?

Arnholm. Never! I have been faithful to my first memories.

Ellida (*half jestingly*). Nonsense! Let the sad old memories alone. You'd better think of becoming a happy husband, I should say.

Arnholm. I should have to be quick about it, then, Mrs. Wangel. Remember, I'm already—I'm ashamed to say—I'm past thirty-seven.

Ellida. Well, all the more reason for being quick. (*She is silent for a moment, and then says, earnestly, in a low voice:*) But listen, dear Arnholm; now I am going to tell you something that I could not have told you then, to save my life.

Arnholm. What is it?

Ellida. When you took the—the useless step you were just speaking of—I could not answer you otherwise than I did.

Arnholm. I know that you had nothing but friendship to give me; I know that well enough.

Ellida. But you did not know that all my mind and soul were then given elsewhere.

Arnholm. At that time!

Ellida. Yes.

Arnholm. But it is impossible. You are mistaken about the time. I hardly think you knew Wangel then.

Ellida. It is not Wangel of whom I speak.

Arnholm. Not Wangel? But at that time, out there at Skjoldviken—I can't remember a single person whom I can imagine the possibility of your caring for.

Ellida. No, no, I quite believe that; for it was all such bewildering madness—all of it.

Arnholm. But tell me more of this.

Ellida. Oh! it's enough if you know I was bound then; and you know it now.

Arnholm. And if you had not been bound?

Ellida. Well?

Arnholm. Would your answer to my letter have been different?

Ellida. How can I tell? When Wangel came the answer was different.

Arnholm. What is your object, then, in telling me that you were bound?

Ellida (*getting up, as if in fear and unrest*). Because I must have someone in whom to confide. No, no; sit still.

Arnholm. Then your husband knows nothing about this?

Ellida. I confessed to him from the first that my thoughts had once been elsewhere. He never asked to know more, and we have never touched upon it since. Besides at bottom it was simply madness. And then it was over directly—that is to a certain extent.

Arnholm (*rising*). Only to a certain extent? Not quite?

Ellida. Yes, yes, it is! Oh, good heavens! Dear Arnholm, it is not what you think. It is something so absolutely incomprehensible, I don't know how I could tell it you. You would only think I was ill, or quite mad.

Arnholm. My dearest lady! Now you really must tell me all about it.

Ellida. Well, then, I'll try to. How will you, as a sensible man, explain to yourself that— (*Looks round, and breaks off.*) Wait a moment. Here's a visitor.

(LYNGSTRAND *comes along the road, and enters the garden. He has a flower in his button-hole, and carries a large, handsome bouquet done up in paper and silk ribbons. He stands somewhat hesitatingly and undecidedly by the verandah.*)

Ellida (*from the arbour*). Have you come to see the girls, Mr. Lyngstrand?

Lyngstrand (*turning round*). Ah, madam, are you there? (*Bows, and comes nearer.*) No, it's not that. It's not the young ladies. It's you yourself, Mrs. Wangel. You know you gave me permission to come and see you—

Ellida. Of course I did. You are always welcome here.

Lyngstrand. Thanks; and as it falls out so luckily that it's a festival here to-day—

Ellida. Oh! Do you know about that?

Lyngstrand. Rather! And so I should like to take the liberty of presenting this to Mrs. Wangel. (*Bows, and offers her the bouquet.*)

Ellida (*smiling*). But, my dear Mr. Lyngstrand,

oughtn't you to give these lovely flowers to Mr. Arnholm himself? For you know it's really he—

Lyngstrand (*looking uncertainly at both of them*). Excuse me, but I don't know this gentleman. It's only—I've only come about the birthday, Mrs. Wangel.

Ellida. Birthday? You've made a mistake, Mr. Lyngstrand. There's no birthday here to-day.

Lyngstrand (*smiling slyly*). Oh! I know all about that! But I didn't think it was to be kept so dark.

Ellida. What do you know?

Lyngstrand. That it is Madame's birthday.

Ellida. Mine?

Arnholm (*looks questioningly at her*). To-day? Surely not.

Ellida (*to Lyngstrand*). Whatever made you think that?

Lyngstrand. It was Miss Hilde who let it out. I just looked in here a little while ago, and I asked the young ladies why they were decorating the place like this, with flowers and flags.

Ellida. Well?

Lyngstrand. And so Miss Hilde said, "Why, to-day is mother's birthday."

Ellida. Mother's!—I see.

Arnholm. Aha! (*He and* ELLIDA *exchange a meaning look.*) Well, now that the young man knows about it—

Ellida (*to Lyngstrand*). Well, now that you know—

Lyngstrand (*offering her the bouquet again*). May I take the liberty of congratulating you.

Ellida (*taking the flowers*). My best thanks. Won't you sit down a moment, Mr. Lyngstrand? (ELLIDA, ARNHOLM, *and* LYNGSTRAND *sit down in the arbour.*) This—birthday business—was to have been kept secret, Mr. Arnholm.

Arnholm. So I see. It wasn't for us uninitiated folk!

Ellida (*putting down the bouquet*). Just so. Not for the uninitiated.

Lyngstrand. 'Pon my word, I won't tell a living soul about it.

Ellida. Oh, it wasn't meant like that. But how are

you getting on? I think you look better than you did.

Lyngstrand. Oh! I think I'm getting on famously And by next year, if I can go south—

Ellida. And you are going south, the girls tell me.

Lyngstrand. Yes, for I've a benefactor and friend at Bergen, who looks after me, and has promised to help me next year.

Ellida. How did you get such a friend?

Lyngstrand. Well, it all happened so very luckily. I once went to sea in one of his ships.

Ellida. Did you? So you wanted to go to sea?

Lyngstrand. No, not at all. But when mother died, father wouldn't have me knocking about at home any longer, and so he sent me to sea. Then we were wrecked in the English Channel on our way home; and that was very fortunate for me.

Arnholm. What do you mean?

Lyngstrand. Yes, for it was in the shipwreck that I got this little weakness—of my chest. I was so long in the ice-cold water before they picked me up; and so I had to give up the sea. Yes, that was very fortunate.

Arnholm. Indeed! Do you think so?

Lyngstrand. Yes, for the weakness isn't dangerous; and now I can be a sculptor, as I so dearly want to be. Just think; to model in that delicious clay, that yields so caressingly to your fingers!

Ellida. And what are you going to model? Is it to be mermen and mermaids? Or is it to be old Vikings?

Lyngstrand. No, not that. As soon as I can set about it, I am going to try if I can produce a great work—a group, as they call it.

Ellida. Yes; but what's the group to be?

Lyngstrand. Oh! something I've experienced myself.

Arnholm. Yes, yes; always stick to that.

Ellida. But what's it to be?

Lyngstrand. Well, I thought it should be the young wife of a sailor, who lies sleeping in strange unrest, and she is dreaming. I fancy I shall do it so that you will see she is dreaming.

Arnholm. Is there anything else?

Lyngstrand. Yes, there's to be another figure—a sort of apparition, as they say. It's her husband, to whom she has been faithless while he was away, and he is drowned at sea.

Arnholm. What?

Ellida. Drowned?

Lyngstrand. Yes, he was drowned on a sea voyage. But that's the wonderful part of it—he comes home all the same. It is night-time. And he is standing by her bed looking at her. He is to stand there dripping wet, like one drawn from the sea.

Ellida (*leaning back in her chair*). What an extraordinary idea! (*Shutting her eyes.*) Oh! I can see it so clearly, living before me!

Arnholm. But how on earth Mr.—Mr.—I thought you said it was to be something you had experienced.

Lyngstrand. Yes. I did experience that—that is to say, to a certain extent.

Arnholm. You saw a dead man?

Lyngstrand. Well, I don't mean I've actually seen this—experienced it in the flesh. But still—

Ellida (*quickly, intently*). Oh! tell me all you can about it! I must understand about all this.

Arnholm (*smiling*). Yes, that'll be quite in your line. Something that has to do with sea fancies.

Ellida. What was it, Mr. Lyngstrand?

Lyngstrand. Well, it was like this. At the time when we were to sail home in the brig from a town they called Halifax, we had to leave the boatswain behind in the hospital. So we had to engage an American instead. This new boatswain—

Ellida. The American?

Lyngstrand. Yes, one day he got the captain to lend him a lot of old newspapers and he was always reading them. For he wanted to teach himself Norwegian, he said.

Ellida. Well, and then?

Lyngstrand. It was one evening in rough weather. All hands were on deck—except the boatswain and

myself. For he had sprained his foot and couldn't walk, and I was feeling rather low, and was lying in my berth. Well, he was sitting there in the forecastle, reading one of those old papers again.

Ellida. Well, well!

Lyngstrand. But just as he was sitting there quietly reading, I heard him utter a sort of yell. And when I looked at him, I saw his face was as white as chalk. And then he began to crush and crumple the paper, and to tear it into a thousand shreds. But he did it so quietly, quietly.

Ellida. Didn't he say anything? Didn't he speak?

Lyngstrand. Not directly; but a little after he said to himself, as it were: "Married—to another man. While I was away."

Ellida (*closes her eyes, and says, half to herself*). He said that?

Lyngstrand. Yes. And think—he said it in perfect Norwegian. That man must have learnt foreign languages very easily—

Ellida. And what then? What else happened?

Lyngstrand. Well, now the remarkable part is coming—that I shall never forget as long as I live. For he added, and that quite quietly, too: "But she is mine, and mine she shall remain. And she shall follow me, if I should come home and fetch her, as a drowned man from the dark sea."

Ellida (*pouring herself out a glass of water. Her hand trembles*). Ah! How close it is here to-day.

Lyngstrand. And he said this with such strength of will that I thought he must be the man to do it.

Ellida. Don't you know anything about — what became of the man?

Lyngstrand. Oh! madame, he's certainly not living now.

Ellida (*quickly*). Why do you think that?

Lyngstrand. Why? Because we were shipwrecked afterwards in the Channel. I had got into the long-boat with the captain and five others. The mate got into the stern-boat; and the American was in that too, and another man.

Ellida. And nothing has been heard of them since?

Lyngstrand. Not a word. The friend who looks after me said so quite recently in a letter. But it's just because of this, I was so anxious to make it into a work of art. I see the faithless sailor-wife so life-like before me, and the avenger who is drowned, and who nevertheless comes home from the sea. I can see them both so distinctly.

Ellida I, too. (*Rises.*) Come; let us go in—or, rather, go down to Wangel. I think it is so suffocatingly hot. (*She goes out of the arbour.*)

Lyngstrand (*who has also risen*). I, for my part, must ask you to excuse me. This was only to be a short visit because of the birthday.

Ellida. As you wish. (*Holds out her hand to him.*) Good-bye, and thank you for the flowers.

(LYNGSTRAND *bows, and goes off through the garden gate.*)

Arnholm (*rises, and goes up to* ELLIDA). I see well enough that this has gone to your heart, Mrs. Wangel.

Ellida. Yes; you may well say so. Although—

Arnholm. But still—after all, it's no more than you were bound to expect.

Ellida (*looks at him surprised*). Expect!

Arnholm. Well, so it seems to me.

Ellida. Expect that anyone should come back again!—come to life again like that!

Arnholm. But what on earth!—is it that mad sculptor's sea story, then?

Ellida. Oh, dear Arnholm, perhaps it isn't so mad after all!

Arnholm. Is it that nonsense about the dead man that has moved you so? And I who thought that—

Ellida. What did you think?

Arnholm. I naturally thought that was only a make-believe of yours. And that you were sitting here grieving because you had found out a family feast was being kept secret; because your husband and his children live a life of remembrances in which you have no part.

Ellida. Oh! no, no! That may be as it may. I have no right to claim my husband wholly and solely for myself.

Arnholm. I should say you had.

Ellida. Yes. Yet, all the same, I have not. That is it. Why, I, too, live in something from which they are shut out.

Arnholm. You! (*In lower tone.*) Do you mean?—you, you do not really love your husband!

Ellida. Oh! yes, yes! I have learnt to love him with all my heart! And that's why it is so terrible—so inexplicable—so absolutely inconceivable!

Arnholm. Now you must and shall confide all your troubles to me. Will you, Mrs. Wangel?

Ellida. I cannot, dear friend. Not now, in any case. Later, perhaps.

(BOLETTE *comes out into the verandah, and goes down into the garden.*)

Bolette. Father's coming up from the office. Hadn't we better all of us go into the sitting-room?

Ellida. Yes, let us.

(WANGEL, *in other clothes, comes with* HILDE *from behind the house.*)

Wangel. Now, then, here I am at your service. And now we shall enjoy a good glass of something cool.

Ellida. Wait a moment. (*She goes into the arbour and fetches the bouquet.*)

Hilde. I say! All those lovely flowers! Where did you get them?

Ellida. From the sculptor, Lyngstrand, my dear Hilde.

Hilde (*starts*). From Lyngstrand?

Bolette (*uneasily*). Has Lyngstrand been here again?

Ellida (*with a half smile*). Yes. He came here with these. Because of the birthday, you understand.

Bolette (*looks at* HILDE). Oh!

Hilde (*mutters*). The idiot!

Wangel (*in painful confusion to* ELLIDA). Hm!—yes, well you see—I must tell you, my dear, good, beloved Ellida—

Ellida (*interrupting*). Come, girls! Let us go and

put my flowers in the water together with the others. (*Goes up to the verandah.*)

Bolette (*to* HILDE). Oh! after all she is good at heart.

Hilde (*in a low tone with angry look*). Fiddlesticks! She only does it to take in father.

Wangel (*on the verandah, presses* ELLIDA'S *hand*). Thanks—thanks! My heartfelt thanks for that, dear Ellida.

Ellida (*arranging the flowers*). Nonsense! Should not I, too, be in it, and take part in—in mother's birthday?

Arnholm. Hm!

(*He goes up to* WANGEL, *and* ELLIDA, BOLETTE, *and* HILDE *remain in the garden below.*)

ACT II.

(SCENE.—*At the "View," a shrub-covered hill behind the town. A little in the background a beacon and a vane. Great stones arranged as seats around the beacon, and in the foreground. Farther back is seen the outer fjord, with islands and outstanding headlands. The open sea is not visible. It is a summer's evening, and twilight. A golden-red shimmer in the air and over the mountain-tops in the far distance. A quartette is faintly heard singing below in the background. Young townsfolk, ladies and gentlemen, come up in pairs, from the right, and, talking familiarly, pass out beyond the beacon. A little after,* BALLESTED *enters, as guide to a party of foreign tourists with their ladies. He is laden with shawls and travelling bags.*)

Ballested (*pointing upwards with a stick*). Sehen Sie, meine Herrschaften, dort, out there, liegt eine andere mountain. That wollen wir also besteigen, and so herunter. (*He goes on with the conversation in French, and leads the party off to the left.* HILDE *comes quickly along the up-hill path, stands still, and looks back. Soon after* BOLETTE *comes up the same way.*)

Bolette. But, dear, why should we run away from Lyngstrand?

Hilde. Because I can't bear going up-hill so slowly. Look—look at him crawling up!

Bolette. Ah! But you know how delicate he is.

Hilde. Do you think it's very—dangerous?

Bolette. I certainly do.

Hilde. He went to consult father this afternoon. I should like to know what father thinks about him.

Bolette. Father told me it was a thickening of the lungs, or something of the sort. He won't live to be old, father says.

Hilde. No! Did he say it? Fancy—that's exactly what I thought.

Bolette. For heaven's sake don't show it!

Hilde. How can you imagine such a thing? (*In an undertone.*) Look, here comes Hans crawling up. Don't you think you can see by the look of him that he's called Hans?

Bolette (*whispering*). Now do behave! You'd better!

(LYNGSTRAND *comes in from the right, a parasol in his hand.*)

Lyngstrand. I must beg the young ladies to excuse me for not getting along as quickly as they did.

Hilde. Have you got a parasol too, now?

Lyngstrand. It's your mother's. She said I was to use it as a stick. I hadn't mine with me.

Bolette. Are they down there still—father and the others?

Lyngstrand. Yes; your father looked in at the restaurant for a moment, and the others are sitting out there listening to the music. But they were coming up here presently, your mother said.

Hilde (*stands looking at him*). I suppose you're thoroughly tired out now?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I almost think I'm a little tired now. I really believe I shall have to sit down a moment. (*He sits on one of the stones in the foreground.*)

Hilde (*standing in front of him*). Do you know there's to be dancing down there on the parade?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I heard there was some talk about it.

Hilde. I suppose you think dancing's great fun?

Bolette (*who begins gathering small flowers among the heather*). Oh, Hilde! Now do let Mr. Lyngstrand get his breath.

Lyngstrand (*to* HILDE). Yes, Miss Hilde; I should very much like to dance—if only I could.

Hilde. Oh, I see! Haven't you ever learnt?

Lyngstrand. No, I've not. But it wasn't *that* I meant. I meant I couldn't because of my chest.

Hilde. Because of that weakness you said you suffered from?

Lyngstrand. Yes; because of that.

Hilde. Aren't you very sorry you've that—weakness?

Lyngstrand. Oh, no! I can't say I am (*smiling*), for I think it's because of it that everyone is so good, and friendly, and kind to me.

Hilde. Yes. And then, besides, it's not dangerous.

Lyngstrand. No; it's not at all dangerous. So I gathered from what your father said to me.

Hilde. And then it will pass away as soon as ever you begin travelling.

Lyngstrand. Of course it will pass away.

Bolette (*with flowers*). Look here, Mr. Lyngstrand, you are to put this in your button-hole.

Lyngstrand. Oh! A thousand thanks, Miss Wangel. It's really too good of you.

Hilde (*looking down the path.*) There they are, coming along the road.

Bolette (*also looking down*). If only they know where to turn off. No; now they're going wrong.

Lyngstrand (*rising*). I'll run down to the turning and call out to them.

Hilde. You'll have to call out pretty loud.

Bolette. No; it's not worth while. You'll only tire yourself again.

Lyngstrand. Oh, it's so easy going down hill. (*Goes off to the right.*)

Hilde. Down hill—yes (*Looking after him.*) Why, he's actually jumping! And he never remembers he'll have to come up again.

Bolette. Poor fellow!

Hilde. If Lyngstrand were to propose, would you accept him?

Bolette. Are you quite mad?

Hilde. Of course, I mean if he weren't troubled with that "weakness." And if he weren't to die so soon, would you have him *then?*

Bolette. I think you'd better have him yourself!

Hilde. No, that I wouldn't! Why, he hasn't a farthing. He hasn't enough even to keep himself.

Bolette. Then why are you always going about with him?

Hilde. Oh, I only do that because of the weakness.

Bolette. I've never noticed that you in the least pity him for it!

Hilde. No, I don't. But I think it so interesting.

Bolette. What is?

Hilde. To look at him and make him tell you it isn't dangerous; and that he's going abroad, and is to be an artist. He really believes it all, and is so thoroughly happy about it. And yet nothing will ever come of it; nothing whatever. For he won't live long enough. I feel that's so fascinating to think of.

Bolette. Fascinating!

Hilde. Yes, I think it's most fascinating. I take that liberty.

Bolette. Hilde, you really are a dreadful child!

Hilde. That's just what I want to be—out of spite. (*Looking down.*) At last! I shouldn't think Arnholm liked coming up hill. (*Turns round.*) By the way, do you know what I noticed about Arnholm at dinner?

Bolette. Well?

Hilde. Just think—his hair's beginning to come off—right on the top of his head.

Bolette. Nonsense! I'm sure that's not true.

Hilde. It is! And then he has wrinkles round both his eyes. Good gracious, Bolette, how could you be so much in love with him when he used to read with you?

Bolette (*smiling*). Yes. Can you believe it? I remember I once shed bitter tears because he thought Bolette was an ugly name.

Hilde. Only to think! (*Looking down.*) No! I say, do just look down here! There's the "Mermaid" walking along and chatting with him. Not with father. I wonder if those two aren't making eyes at one another.

Bolette. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! How can you stand there and say such a thing of her? Now, when everything was beginning to be so pleasant between us.

Hilde. Of course—just try and persuade yourself of that, my child! Oh, no! It will never be pleasant between us and her. For she doesn't belong to us at all. And we don't belong to her either. Goodness knows what father dragged her into the house for! I shouldn't wonder if some fine day she went mad under our very eyes.

Bolette. Mad! How can you think such a thing?

Hilde. Oh! it wouldn't be so extraordinary. Her mother went mad, too. She died mad—I know that.

Bolette. Yes, heaven only knows what you don't poke your nose into. But now don't go chattering about this. Do be good—for father's sake. Do you hear, Hilde?

(WANGEL, ELLIDA, ARNHOLM *and* LYNGSTRAND *come up from the right.*)

Ellida (*pointing to the background*). Out there it lies.

Arnholm. Quite right. It must be in that direction.

Ellida. Out there is the sea.

Bolette (*to* ARNHOLM). Don't you think it is delightful up here?

Arnholm. It's magnificent, I think. Glorious view!

Wangel. I suppose you never used to come up here?

Arnholm. No, never. In my time I think it was hardly accessible; there wasn't any path even.

Wangel. And no grounds. All this has been done during the last few years.

Bolette. And there, at the "Pilot's Mount," it's even grander than here.

Wangel. Shall we go there, Ellida?

Ellida (*sitting down on one of the stones.*) Thanks, not I; but you others can. I'll sit here meanwhile.

Wangel. Then I'll stay with you. The girls can show Arnholm about.

Bolette. Would you like to go with us, Mr. Arnholm?

Arnholm. I should like to, very much. Does a path lead up there too?

Bolette. Oh yes. There's a nice broad path.

Hilde. The path is so broad that two people can walk along it comfortably, arm in arm.

Arnholm (*jestingly*). Is that really so, little Missie. (*To* BOLETTE.) Shall we two see if she is right?

Bolette (*suppressing a smile*). Very well, let's go. (*They go out to the left, arm in arm.*)

Hilde (*to* LYNGSTRAND). Shall we go too?

Lyngstrand. Arm in arm?

Hilde. Oh, why not? For aught I care!

Lyngstrand (*taking her arm, laughing contentedly*) This is a jolly lark.

Hilde. Lark?

Lyngstrand. Yes; because it looks exactly as if we were engaged.

Hilde. I'm sure you've never walked out arm in arm with a lady before, Mr. Lyngstrand. (*They go off.*)

Wangel (*who is standing beside the beacon*). Dear Ellida, now we have a moment to ourselves.

Ellida. Yes; come and sit down here, by me.

Wangel (*sitting down*). It is so free and quiet. Now we can have a little talk together.

Ellida. What about?

Wangel. About yourself, and then about us both. Ellida, I see very well that it can't go on like this.

Ellida. What do you propose instead?

Wangel. Perfect confidence, dear. A true life together—as before.

Ellida. Oh, if that could be! But it is so absolutely impossible!

Wangel. I think I understand you, from certain things you have let fall now and again.

Ellida (*passionately*). Oh, you do not! Don't say you understand!

Wangel. Yes. Yours is an honest nature, Ellida—yours is a faithful mind.

Ellida. It is.

Wangel. Any position in which you could feel safe and happy must be a completely true and real one.

Ellida (*looking eagerly at him*). Well, and then?

Wangel. You are not suited to be a man's second wife.

Ellida. What makes you think that?

Wangel. It has often flashed across me like a foreboding. To-day it was clear to me. The children's memorial feast—you saw in me a kind of accomplice. Well, yes; a man's memories, after all, cannot be wiped out—not so mine, anyhow. It isn't in me.

Ellida. I know that. Oh! I know that so well.

Wangel. But you are mistaken all the same. To you it is almost as if the children's mother were still living—as if she were still here invisible amongst us. You think my heart is equally divided between you and her. It is this thought that shocks you. You see something immoral in our relation, and that is why you no longer can or will live with me as my wife.

Ellida (*rising*). Have you seen all that, Wangel—seen into all this?

Wangel. Yes; to-day I have at last seen to the very heart of it—to its utmost depths.

Ellida. To its very heart, you say? Oh, do not think that!

Wangel (*rising*). I see very well that there is more than this, dear Ellida.

Ellida (*anxiously*). You know there is more?

Wangel. Yes. You cannot bear your surroundings here. The mountains crush you, and weigh upon your heart. Nothing is open enough for you here. The heavens above you are not spacious enough. The air is not strong and bracing enough.

Ellida. You are right. Night and day, winter and

summer, it weighs upon me—this irresistible home-sickness for the sea.

Wangel. I know it well, dear Ellida (*laying his hands upon her head*). And that is why the poor sick child shall go home to her own again.

Ellida. What do you mean?

Wangel. Something quite simple. We are going away.

Ellida. Going away?

Wangel. Yes. Somewhere by the open sea—a place where you can find a true home, after your own heart.

Ellida. Oh, dear, do not think of that! That is quite impossible. You can live happily nowhere on earth but here!

Wangel. That must be as it may. And, besides, do you think I can live happily here—without you?

Ellida. But I am here. And I will stay here. You have me.

Wangel. Have I, Ellida?

Ellida. Oh! don't speak of all this. Why, here you have all that you love and strive for. All your life's work lies here.

Wangel. That must be as it may, I tell you. We are going away from here—are going somewhere—out there. That is quite settled now, dear Ellida.

Ellida. What do you think we should gain by that?

Wangel. You would regain your health and peace of mind.

Ellida. Hardly. And then you, yourself! Think of yourself, too! What of you?

Wangel. I would win you back again, my dearest.

Ellida. But you cannot do that! No, no, you can't do that, Wangel! That is the terrible part of it—heart-breaking to think of.

Wangel. That remains to be proved. If you are harbouring such thoughts, truly there is no other salvation for you than to go hence. And the sooner the better. Now this is irrevocably settled, do you hear?

Ellida. No! Then in heaven's name I had better tell you everything straight out. Everything just as it is.

Wangel. Yes, yes! do.

Ellida. For you shall not ruin your happiness for my sake, especially as it can't help us in any way.

Wangel. I have your word now that you will tell me everything just as it is.

Ellida. I'll tell you everything as well as I can, and as far as I understand it. Come here and sit by me. (*They sit down on the stones.*)

Wangel. Well, Ellida, so—

Ellida. That day when you came out there and asked me if I would be yours, you spoke so frankly and honestly to me about your first marriage. It had been so happy, you said.

Wangel. And so it was.

Ellida. Yes, yes! I am sure of that, dear! It is not for that I am referring to it now. I only want to remind you that I, on my side, was frank with you. I told you quite openly that once in my life I had cared for another. That there had been a—a kind of engagement between us.

Wangel. A kind of—

Ellida. Yes, something of the sort. Well, it only lasted such a very short time. He went away; and after that I put an end to it. I told you all that.

Wangel. Why rake up all this now? It really didn't concern me; nor have I once asked you who he was!

Ellida. No, you have not. You are always so thoughtful for me.

Wangel (*smiling*). Oh, in this case I could guess the name well enough for myself.

Ellida. The name?

Wangel. Out in Skjoldviken and thereabouts, there weren't many to choose from; or, rather, there was only a single one.

Ellida. You believe it was Arnholm!

Wangel. Well, wasn't it?

Ellida. No!

Wangel. Not he? Then I don't in the least understand.

Ellida. Can you remember that late in the autumn a

large American ship once put into Skjoldviken for repairs?

Wangel. Yes, I remember it very well. It was on board that ship that the captain was found one morning in his cabin—murdered. I myself went out to make the *post-mortem*.

Ellida. Yes, it was you.

Wangel. It was the second mate who had murdered him.

Ellida. No one can say that. For it was never proved.

Wangel. There was enough against him anyhow, or why should he have drowned himself as he did?

Ellida. He did not drown himself. He sailed in a ship to the north.

Wangel (*startled*). How do you know?

Ellida (*with an effort*). Well, Wangel—it was this second mate to whom I was—betrothed.

Wangel (*springing up*). What! Is it possible!

Ellida. Yes, it is so. It was to him!

Wangel. But how on earth, Ellida! How did you come to betroth yourself to such a man? To an absolute stranger! What is his name?

Ellida. At that time he called himself Friman. Later, in his letters he signed himself Alfred Johnston.

Wangel. And where did he come from?

Ellida. From Finmark, he said. For the rest, he was born in Finland, had come to Norway there as a child with his father, I think.

Wangel. A Finlander, then?

Ellida. Yes, so he called himself.

Wangel. What else do you know about him?

Ellida. Only that he went to sea very young. And that he had been on long voyages.

Wangel. Nothing more?

Ellida. No. We never spoke of such things.

Wangel. Of what did you speak, then?

Ellida. We spoke mostly about the sea.

Wangel. Ah! About the sea—

Ellida. About storms and calm. Of dark nights at sea. And of the sea in the glittering sunshiny days we spoke also. But we spoke most of the whales, and the

dolphins, and the seals who lie out there on the rocks in the midday sun. And then we spoke of the gulls, and the eagles, and all the other sea birds. I think—isn't it wonderful?—when we talked of such things it seemed to me as if both the sea beasts and sea birds were one with him.

Wangel. And with you?

Ellida. Yes; I almost thought I belonged to them all, too.

Wangel. Well, well! And so it was that you betrothed yourself to him?

Ellida. Yes. He said I must.

Wangel. You must? Had you no will of your own, then?

Ellida. Not when he was near. Ah! afterwards I thought it all so inexplicable.

Wangel. Were you often together?

Ellida. No; not very often. One day he came out to our place, and looked over the lighthouse. After that I got to know him, and we met now and again. But then that happened about the captain, and so he had to go away.

Wangel. Yes, yes. Tell me more about that.

Ellida. It was just daybreak when I had a note from him. He said in it I was to go out to him at the Bratthammer. You know the headland there between the lighthouse and Skjoldviken?

Wangel. I know, I know!

Ellida. I was to go out there at once, he wrote, because he wanted to speak to me.

Wangel. And you went?

Ellida. Yes. I could not do otherwise. Well, then he told me he had stabbed the captain in the night.

Wangel. He said that himself! Actually said so!

Ellida. Yes. But he had only acted rightly and justly, he said.

Wangel. Rightly and justly! Why did he stab him, then?

Ellida. He wouldn't speak out about that. He said it was not fit for me to hear.

Wangel. And you believed his naked, bare word?

Ellida. Yes. It never occurred to me to do otherwise. Well, anyhow, he had to go away. But now, when he was to bid me farewell—. No; you never could imagine what he thought of—

Wangel. Well? Tell me.

Ellida. He took from his pocket a key-ring—and drew a ring that he always wore from his finger, and he took a small ring I had. These two he put on the key-ring. And then he said we should wed ourselves to the sea.

Wangel. Wed?

Ellida. Yes, so he said. And with that he threw the key-ring, and our rings, with all his might, as far as he could into the deep.

Wangel. And you, Ellida, you did all this?

Ellida. Yes—only think—it then seemed to me as if it must be so. But, thank God!—he went away.

Wangel. And when he was gone?

Ellida. Oh! You can surely understand that I soon came to my senses again—that I saw how absolutely mad and meaningless it had all been.

Wangel. But you spoke just now of letters. So you have heard from him since?

Ellida. Yes, I have heard from him. First I had a few short lines from Archangel. He only wrote he was going to America. And then he told me where to send an answer.

Wangel. And did you?

Ellida. At once. I wrote him, of course, that all must be at an end between us; and that he must no longer think of me, just as I should no longer think of him.

Wangel. But did he write again?

Ellida. Yes, he wrote again.

Wangel. And what was his answer to your communication?

Ellida. He took no notice of it. It was exactly as if I had never broken with him. He wrote quite composedly and calmly that I must wait for him. When

he could have me he would let me know, and then I was to go to him at once.

Wangel. So he would not release you?

Ellida. No. Then I wrote again, almost word for word as I had before; or perhaps more firmly.

Wangel. And he gave in?

Ellida. Oh, no! Don't think that! He wrote quietly, as before—not a word of my having broken with him. Then I knew it was useless, and so I never wrote to him again.

Wangel. And you never heard from him?

Ellida. Oh yes! I have had three letters since then. Once he wrote to me from California, and a second time from China. The last letter I had from him was from Australia. He wrote he was going to the gold-mines; but since then he has made no sign.

Wangel. This man has had a strange power over you, Ellida.

Ellida. Yes, yes! The terrible man!

Wangel. But you mustn't think of that any more. Never again—never! Promise me that, my dear, beloved Ellida. Now we must try another treatment for you. Fresher air than here within the fjords. The salt, fresh air of the sea! Dear, what say you to that?

Ellida. Oh! don't speak of it! Don't think of it! There is no help in this for me. I feel that so well. I can't shake it off—not even there.

Wangel. What, dear?—What do you really mean?

Ellida. I mean the horror of it, this incomprehensible power over the mind.

Wangel. But you have shaken it off—long since—when you broke with him. Why all this is long past now.

Ellida (*springing up*). No; that it is not—it is not!

Wangel. Not past?

Ellida. No, Wangel, it is not past; and I fear it never will be—never, in all our life.

Wangel (*in a pained voice*). Do you mean to say that in your innermost heart you have never been able to forget this strange man?

Ellida. I had forgotten him; but then it was as if he had suddenly come back again.

Wangel. How long ago is that?

Ellida. It's about three years ago, now, or a little longer. It was just when I expected the child.

Wangel. Ah! at that time? Yes, Ellida — now I begin to understand many things.

Ellida. You are mistaken, dear. What has come to me? Oh! I believe nothing on earth will ever make it clear.

Wangel (*looking sadly at her*). Only to think that all these three years you have cared for another man. Cared for another. Not for me — but for another!

Ellida. Oh! you are so utterly mistaken! I care for no one but you.

Wangel (*in a subdued voice*). Why, then, in all this time have you not lived with me as my wife?

Ellida. Because of the horror that comes from the strange man.

Wangel. The horror?

Ellida. Yes, the horror. A horror so terrible—such as only the sea could hold. For now you shall hear, Wangel.

(*The young townsfolk come back, bow, and pass out to the right. Together with them come* ARNHOLM, BOLETTE, HILDE, *and* LYNGSTRAND.)

Bolette (*as she passes by*). Well, are you still walking about up here?

Ellida. Yes, it is so cool and pleasant up here on the heights.

Arnholm. We, for our part, are going down for a dance.

Wangel. All right. We'll soon come down—we also.

Hilde. Good-bye, for the present!

Ellida. Mr. Lyngstrand, will you wait one moment? (LYNGSTRAND *stops.* ARNHOLM, BOLETTE *and* HILDE *go out. To* LYNGSTRAND.) Are you going to dance too?

Lyngstrand. No, Mrs. Wangel. I don't think I dare.

Ellida. No, you should be careful, you know—your chest. You're not quite well yet, you see.

Lyngstrand. Not quite.

Ellida (*with some hesitation*). How long may it be now since you went on that voyage?

Lyngstrand. That time when I contracted this weakness?

Ellida. Yes, that voyage you told me about this morning?

Lyngstrand. Oh! it's about—wait a moment—yes, it's a good three years now.

Ellida. Three years, then.

Lyngstrand. Perhaps a little more. We left America in February, and we were wrecked in March. It was the equinoctial gales we came in for.

Ellida (*looking at* WANGEL). So it was at that time—

Wangel. But, dear Ellida—

Ellida. Well, don't let me detain you, Mr. Lyngstrand. Now go down, but don't dance.

Lyngstrand. No, I'll only look on. (*He goes out.*)

Ellida. Johnston was on board too, I am quite certain of it.

Wangel. What makes you think so?

Ellida (*without answering*). He learnt on board that I had married another while he was away. And so that very hour this came over me.

Wangel. The horror?

Ellida. Yes. All of a sudden I see him alive right in front of me; or, rather a little in profile. He never looks at me, only he is there.

Wangel. How do you think he looks?

Ellida. Exactly as when I saw him last.

Wangel. Ten years ago?

Ellida. Yes; out there at Bratthammeren. Most distinctly of all I see his breastpin, with a large bluish-white pearl in it. The pearl is like a dead fish's eye, and it seems to glare at me.

Wangel. Good God! You are more ill than I thought. More ill than you yourself know, Ellida.

Ellida. Yes, yes! Help me if you can, for I feel how it is drawing closer and more close.

Wangel. And you have gone about in this state three whole years, bearing for yourself this secret suffering, without confiding in me.

Ellida. But I could not; not till it became necessary for your own sake. If I had confided in you I should also have had to confide to you the unutterable.

Wangel. Unutterable?

Ellida. No, no, no! Do not ask. Only one thing, nothing more. Wangel, when shall we understand that mystery of the boy's eyes?

Wangel. My dear love, Ellida, I assure you it was only your own fancy. The child had exactly the same eyes as other normal children have.

Ellida. No, he had not. And you could not see it! The child's eyes changed colour with the sea. When the fjord lay bathed in sunshine, so were his eyes. And so in storm. Oh, I saw it, if you did not!

Wangel (*humouring her*). Maybe. But even if it were true, what then?

Ellida (*in lower voice, and coming nearer*). I have seen such eyes before.

Wangel. Well? Where?

Ellida. Out at Bratthammeren, ten years ago.

Wangel (*stepping back*). What does it mean?

Ellida (*whispers, trembling*). The child had the strange man's eyes.

Wangel (*cries out reluctantly*). Ellida!

Ellida (*clasps her hands despairingly about her head*). Now you understand why I would not, why I *dared* not, live with you as your wife. (*She turns suddenly and rushes off over the heights.*)

Wangel (*hurrying after her and calling*). Ellida, Ellida! My poor unhappy Ellida!

ACT III

(SCENE.—*A more remote part of* DOCTOR WANGEL'S *garden. It is boggy and overshadowed by large old trees. To the right is seen the margin of a dank pond. A low, open fence separates the garden from the footpath, and the fjord in the background. Beyond is the range of mountains, with its peaks. It is afternoon, almost evening.* BOLETTE *sits on a stone seat, and on the seat lie some books and a work-basket.* HILDE *and* LYNGSTRAND, *both with fishing-tackle, walk along the bank of the pond.*)

Hilde (*making a sign to Lyngstrand*). I can see a large one.

Lyngstrand (*looking*). Where?

Hilde (*pointing*). Can't you see? He's down there. Good gracious! There's another! (*Looks through the trees.*) Out there Now he's coming to frighten him away!

Bolette (*looking up*). Who's coming?

Hilde. Your tutor, Miss!

Bolette. Mine?

Hilde. Yes. Goodness knows he never was mine.

(ARNHOLM *enters from between the trees.*)

Arnholm. Are there fish in the pond now?

Hilde. There are some very ancient carp.

Arnholm. No! Are the old carp still alive?

Hilde. Yes; they're pretty tough. But now we're going to try and get rid of some of them.

Arnholm. You'd better try out there at the fjord.

Lyngstrand. No; the pond is—well—so to say—more mysterious.

Hilde. Yes; it's fascinating here. Have you been in the sea?

Arnholm. Yes; I've come straight from the baths.

Hilde. I suppose you kept in the enclosure?

Arnholm. Yes; I'm not much of a swimmer.

Hilde. Can you swim on your back?

Arnholm. No.

Hilde. I can. (*To* LYNGSTRAND.) Let's try out there on the other side. (*They go off along the pond.*)

Arnholm (*coming closer to* BOLETTE). Are you sitting all alone here, Bolette?

Bolette. Yes; I generally do.

Arnholm. Isn't your mother down here in the garden?

Bolette. No—she's sure to be out with father.

Arnholm. How is she this afternoon?

Bolette. I don't quite know. I forgot to ask.

Arnholm. What books have you there?

Bolette. The one's something about botany. And the other's a geography.

Arnholm. Do you care about such things?

Bolette. Yes, if only I had time for it. But, first of all, I've to look after the housekeeping.

Arnholm. Doesn't your mother help you—your stepmother—doesn't she help with that?

Bolette. No, that's my business. Why, I saw to that during the two years father was alone. And so it has been since.

Arnholm. But you're as fond as ever of reading.

Bolette. Yes, I read all the useful books I can get hold of. One wants to know something about the world. For here we live so completely outside of all that's going on—or almost.

Arnholm. Now don't say that, dear Bolette.

Bolette. Yes! I think we live very much as the carp down there in the pond. They have the fjord so near them, where the shoals of wild fishes pass in and out. But the poor, tame house-fishes know nothing, and they can take no part in that.

Arnholm. I don't think it would fare very well with them if they could get out there.

Bolette. Oh! it would be much the same, I expect.

Arnholm. Moreover, you can't say that one is so completely out of the world here—not in the summer anyhow. Why, nowadays this is quite a rendezvous for the busy world—almost a terminus for the time being.

Bolette. Ah, yes! you who yourself are only here for the time being—it is easy for you to make fun of us.

Arnholm. I make fun? How can you think that?

Bolette. Well, all that about this being a rendezvous, and a terminus for the busy world—that's something you've heard the townsfolk here saying. Yes—they're in the habit of saying that sort of thing.

Arnholm. Well, frankly, I've noticed that, too.

Bolette. But really there's not an atom of truth in it. Not for us who always live here. What good is it to us that the great strange world comes hither for a time on its way North to see the midnight sun? We ourselves have no part in that; we see nothing of the midnight sun. No! We've got to be good, and live our lives here in our carp-pond.

Arnholm (*sitting down by her*). Now tell me, dear Bolette, isn't there something or other — something definite you are longing for?

Bolette. Perhaps.

Arnholm. What is it, really? What is it you are longing for?

Bolette. Chiefly to get away.

Arnholm. That above all, then.

Bolette. Yes; and then to learn more. To really know something about everything.

Arnholm. When I used to teach you, your father often said he would let you go to college.

Bolette. Yes, poor father! He says so many things. But when it comes to the point he—there's no real stamina in father.

Arnholm. No, unfortunately you're right there. He has not exactly stamina. But have you ever spoken to him about it—spoken really earnestly and seriously?

Bolette. No, I've not quite done that.

Arnholm. But really you ought to. Before it is too late, Bolette, why don't you?

Bolette. Oh! I suppose it's because there's no real stamina in me either. I certainly take after father in that.

Arnholm. Hm—don't you think you're unjust to yourself there?

Bolette. No, unfortunately. Besides, father has so little time for thinking of me and my future, and not much desire to either. He prefers to put such things away from him whenever he can. He is so completely taken up with Ellida.

Arnholm. With whom? What?

Bolette. I mean that he and my stepmother—(*breaks off*). Father and mother suffice one another, as you see.

Arnholm. Well, so much the better if you were to get away from here.

Bolette. Yes; but I don't think I've a right to; not to forsake father.

Arnholm. But, dear Bolette, you'll have to do that sometime, anyhow. So it seems to me the sooner the better.

Bolette. I suppose there is nothing else for it. After all, I must think of myself, too. I must try and get occupation of some sort. When once father's gone, I have no one to hold to. But, poor father! I dread leaving him.

Arnholm. Dread?

Bolette. Yes, for father's sake.

Arnholm. But, good heavens! Your stepmother? She is left to him.

Bolette. That's true. But she's not in the least fit to do all that mother did so well. There is so much she doesn't see, or that she won't see, or that she doesn't care about: I don't know which it is.

Arnholm. Hm, I think I understand what you mean.

Bolette. Poor father! He is weak in some things. Perhaps you've noticed that yourself? He hasn't enough occupation, either, to fill up his time. And then she is so thoroughly incapable of helping him; however, that's to some extent his own fault.

Arnholm. In what way?

Bolette. Oh! father always likes to see happy faces about him. There must be sunshine and joy in the

house, he says. And so I'm afraid he often gives her medicine which will do her little good in the long run.

Arnholm. Do you really think that?

Bolette. Yes; I can't get rid of the thought. She is so odd at times. (*Passionately.*) But isn't it unjust that I should have to stay at home here? Really it's not of any earthly use to father. Besides, I have a duty towards myself, too, I think.

Arnholm. Do you know what, Bolette? We two must talk these matters over more carefully.

Bolette. Oh! That won't be much use. I suppose I was created to stay here in the carp pond.

Arnholm. Not a bit of it. It depends entirely upon yourself.

Bolette (*quickly*). Do you think so?

Arnholm. Yes, believe me, it lies wholly and solely in your own hands.

Bolette. If only that were true! Will you perhaps put in a good word for me with father?

Arnholm. Certainly. But first of all I must speak frankly and freely with you yourself, dear.

Bolette (*looks out to the left*). Hush! don't let them notice anything. We'll speak of this later.

(ELLIDA *enters from the left. She has no hat on, but a large shawl is thrown over her head and shoulders.*)

Ellida (*with restless animation*). How pleasant it is here! How delightful it is here!

Arnholm (*rising*). Have you been for a walk?

Ellida. Yes, a long, long lovely walk up there with Wangel. And now we're going for a sail.

Bolette. Won't you sit down.

Ellida. No, thanks; I won't sit down.

Bolette (*making room on seat*). Here's a pleasant seat.

Ellida (*walking about*). No, no, no! I'll not sit down—not sit down!

Arnholm. I'm sure your walk has done you good. You look quite refreshed.

Ellida. Oh, I feel so thoroughly well—I feel so unspeakably happy. So safe, so safe! (*Looking out to the left.*) What great steamer is that coming along there?

Bolette (*rising, and also looking out*). It must be the large English ship.

Arnholm. It's passing the buoy. Does it usually stop here?

Bolette. Only for half an hour. It goes further up the fjord.

Ellida. And then sails away again to-morrow—away over the great open sea—right over the sea. Only think! to be with them. If one could. If only one could!

Arnholm. Have you never been any long sea voyage, Mrs. Wangel?

Ellida. Never; only those little trips in the fjord here.

Bolette (*with a sigh*). Ah, no! I suppose we must put up with the dry land.

Arnholm. Well, after all, that really is our home.

Ellida. No; I don't think it is.

Arnholm. Not the land?

Ellida. No; I don't believe so. I think that if only men had from the beginning accustomed themselves to live on the sea, or *in* the sea perhaps, we should be more perfect than we are—both better and happier.

Arnholm. You really think that?

Ellida. Yes. I should like to know if we should not. I've often spoken to Wangel about it.

Arnholm. Well, and he?

Ellida. He thinks it might be so.

Arnholm (*jestingly*). Well, perhaps! But it can't be helped. We've once for all entered upon the wrong path, and have become land beasts instead of sea beasts. Anyhow, I suppose it's too late to make good the mistake now.

Ellida. Yes, you've spoken a sad truth. And I think men instinctively feel something of this themselves. And they bear it about with them as a secret regret and sorrow. Believe me—herein lies the deepest cause for the sadness of men. Yes, believe me, in this.

Arnholm. But, my dearest Mrs. Wangel, I have not observed that men are so extremely sad. It seems to me, on the contrary, that most of them take life easily and pleasantly—and with a great, quiet, unconscious joy.

Ellida. Oh! no, it is not so. The joy is, I suppose, something like our joy at the long pleasant summer days—it has the presentiment of the dark days coming. And it is this presentiment that casts its shadows over the joy of men, just as the driving clouds cast their shadow over the fjords. It lies there so bright and blue—and of a sudden—

Arnholm. You shouldn't give way to such sad thoughts. Just now you were so glad and so bright.

Ellida. Yes, yes, so I was. Oh, this—this is so stupid of me. (*Looking about her uneasily.*) If only Wangel would come! He promised me so faithfully he would. And yet he does not come. Dear Mr. Arnholm, won't you try and find him for me?

Arnholm. Gladly—

Ellida. Tell him he must come here directly now. For now I can't see him—

Arnholm. Not see him?

Ellida. Oh! you don't understand. When he is not by me I often can't remember how he looks. And then it is as if I had quite lost him. That is so terribly painful. But do go, please. (*She paces round the pond.*)

Bolette (*to Arnholm*). I will go with you—you don't know the way.

Arnholm. Nonsense, I shall be all right.

Bolette (*aside*). No, no, no. I am anxious. I'm afraid he is on board the steamer.

Arnholm. Afraid?

Bolette. Yes. He usually goes to see if there are any acquaintances of his. And there's a restaurant on board—

Arnholm. Ah! Come then.

(*He and* BOLETTE *go off.* ELLIDA *stands still awhile, staring down at the pond. Now and again she speaks to herself in a low voice, and breaks off. Along the footpath beyond the garden fence a* STRANGER *in travelling dress comes from the left. His hair and beard are bushy and red. He has a Scotch cap on, and a travelling bag with strap across his shoulders.*)

The Stranger (*goes slowly along by the fence and peeps into the garden. When he catches sight of* ELLIDA *he stands still, looks at her fixedly and searchingly, and speaks in a low voice*). Good-evening, Ellida!

Ellida (*turns round with a cry*). Oh dear! have you come at last!

The Stranger. Yes, at last.

Ellida (*looking at him astonished and frightened*). Who are you? Do you seek any one here?

The Stranger. You surely know that well enough, Ellida.

Ellida (*starting*) What is *this!* How do you address me? Whom are you looking for?

The Stranger. Well, I suppose I'm looking for you.

Ellida (*shuddering*). Oh! (*She stares at him, totters back, uttering a half-suffocating cry*). The eyes!—the eyes!

The Stranger. Are you beginning to recognise me at last? I knew you at once, Ellida.

Ellida. The eyes! Don't look at me like that! I shall cry for help!

The Stranger. Hush, hush! Do not fear. I shan't hurt you.

Ellida (*covering her eyes with her hands*). Do not look at me like that, I say!

The Stranger (*leaning with his arms on the garden fence*). I came with the English steamer.

Ellida (*stealing a frightened look at him*). What do you want with me?

The Stranger. I promised you to come as soon as I could—

Ellida. Go—go away! Never, never come here again! I wrote to you that everything must be over between us—everything! Oh! you know that!

The Stranger (*imperturbably, and not answering her*). I would gladly have come to you sooner; but I could not. Now, at last I am able to, and I am here, Ellida.

Ellida. What is it you want with me? What do you mean? Why have you come here?

The Stranger. Surely you know I've come to fetch you.

Ellida (*recoils in terror*). To fetch me! is that what you mean?

The Stranger. Of course.

Ellida. But surely you know that I am married?

The Stranger. Yes, I know.

Ellida. And yet—and yet you have come to—to fetch me!

The Stranger. Certainly I have.

Ellida (*seizing her head with both her hands*). Oh, this misery—this horror! This horror!

The Stranger. Perhaps you don't want to come?

Ellida (*bewildered*). Don't look at me like that.

The Stranger. I was asking you if you didn't want to come.

Ellida. No, no, no! Never in all eternity! I will not, I tell you. I neither can nor will. (*In lower tone*) I dare not.

The Stranger (*climbs over the fence, and comes into the garden*). Well, Ellida, let me tell you one thing before I go.

Ellida (*wishes to fly, but cannot. She stands as one paralysed with terror, and leans for support against the trunk of a tree by the pond*). Don't touch me! Don't come near me! No nearer! Don't touch me, I say!

The Stranger (*cautiously coming a few steps nearer*). You need not be so afraid of me, Ellida.

Ellida (*covering her eyes with her hands*). Don't look at me like that.

The Stranger. Do not be afraid—not afraid.

(WANGEL *comes through the garden, from the left.*)

Wangel (*still half-way between the trees*). Well, you've had to wait for me a long while.

Ellida (*rushes towards him, clings fast to his arm, and cries out*). Oh! Wangel! Save me! *You* save me—if you can!

Wangel. Ellida! What in heaven's name—

Ellida. Save me, Wangel! Don't you see him there? Why, he is standing there!

Wangel (*looking thither*). *That* man? (*Coming*

nearer.) May I ask you who you are, and what you have come into this garden for?

The Stranger (*motions with a nod towards* ELLIDA). I want to talk to her.

Wangel. Oh! indeed. So I suppose it was you. (*To* ELLIDA.) I hear a stranger has been to the house and asked for you?

The Stranger. Yes, it was I.

Wangel. And what do you want with my wife? (*Turning round.*) Do you know him, Ellida?

Ellida (*in a low voice and wringing her hands*). Do I know him! Yes, yes, yes!

Wangel (*quickly*). Well!

Ellida. Why, it is he, Wangel!—he himself! He who you know—

Wangel. What! What is it you say? (*Turning.*) Are you the Johnston who once—

The Stranger. You may call me Johnston for aught I care! However, that's not my name.

Wangel. It is not?

The Stranger. It is—no longer. No!

Wangel. And what may you want with my wife? For I suppose you know the lighthouse-keeper's daughter has been married this long time, and whom she married, you of course also know.

The Stranger. I've known it over three years.

Ellida (*eagerly*). How did you come to know it?

The Stranger. I was on my way home to you, Ellida. I came across an old newspaper. It was a paper from these parts, and in it there was that about the marriage.

Ellida (*looking straight in front of her*). The marriage! So it was that!

The Stranger. It seemed so wonderful to me. For the rings—why that, too, was a marriage, Ellida.

Ellida (*covering her face with her hands*). Oh!—

Wangel. How dare you?

The Stranger. Have you forgotten that?

Ellida (*feeling his look, suddenly cries out*). Don't stand there and look at me like that!

Wangel (*goes up to him*). You must deal with me,

and not with her. In short—now that you know the circumstances—what is it you really want here? Why do you seek my wife?

The Stranger. I promised Ellida to come to her as soon as I could.

Wangel. Ellida—again!—

The Stranger. And Ellida promised faithfully she would wait for me until I came.

Wangel. I notice you call my wife by her first name. This kind of familiarity is not customary with us here.

The Stranger. I know that perfectly. But as she first, and above all, belongs to me—

Wangel. To you, still—

Ellida (*draws back behind* WANGEL). Oh! he will never release me!

Wangel. To you? You say she belongs to you?

The Stranger. Has she told you anything about the two rings—my ring and Ellida's?

Wangel. Certainly. And what then? She put an end to that long ago. You have had her letters, so you know this yourself.

The Stranger. Both Ellida and I agreed that what we did should have all the strength and authority of a real and full marriage.

Ellida. But you hear, I will not! Never on earth do I wish to know anything more of you. Do not look at me like that. I will not, I tell you!

Wangel. You must be mad to think you can come here, and base any claim upon such childish nonsense.

The Stranger. That's true. A claim, in your sense, I certainly have not.

Wangel. What do you mean to do, then? You surely do not imagine you can take her from me by force, against her own will?

The Stranger. No. What would be the good of that? If Ellida wishes to be with me she must come freely.

Ellida (*starts, crying out*). Freely!

Wangel. And you actually believe that—

Ellida (*to herself*). Freely!

Wangel. You must have taken leave of your senses!

Go your ways. We have nothing more to do with you.

The Stranger (*looking at his watch*). It is almost time for me to go on board again. (*Coming nearer.*) Yes, yes, Ellida, now I have done my duty. (*Coming still nearer.*) I have kept the word I gave you.

Ellida (*beseechingly drawing away*). Oh ! don't touch me !

The Stranger. And so now you must think it over till to-morrow night—

Wangel. There is nothing to think over here. See that you get away.

The Stranger (*still to* ELLIDA). Now I'm going with the steamer up the fjord. To-morrow night I will come again, and then I shall look for you here. You must wait for me here in the garden, for I prefer settling the matter with you alone ; you understand ?

Ellida (*in low, trembling tone*). Do you hear that, Wangel ?

Wangel. Only keep calm. We shall know how to prevent this visit.

The Stranger. Good-bye for the present, Ellida. So to-morrow night—

Ellida (*imploringly*). Oh ! no, no ! Do not come to-morrow night ! Never come here again !

The Stranger. And should you then have a mind to follow me over seas—

Ellida. Oh, don't look at me like that !

The Stranger. I only mean that you must then be ready to set out.

Wangel. Go up to the house, Ellida.

Ellida. I cannot ! Oh, help me ! Save me, Wangel !

The Stranger. For you must remember that if you do not go with me to-morrow all is at an end.

Ellida (*looks tremblingly at him*). Then all is at an end ? For ever ?

The Stranger (*nodding*). Nothing can change it then, Ellida. I shall never again come to this land. You will never see me again, nor hear from me either. Then I shall be as one dead and gone from you for ever.

Ellida (*breathing with difficulty*). Oh!

The Stranger. So think carefully what you do. Good-bye! (*He goes to the fence and climbs over it, stands still, and says.*) Yes, Ellida; be ready for the journey to-morrow night. For then I shall come and fetch you. (*He goes slowly and calmly down the footpath to the right.*)

Ellida (*looking after him for a time*). Freely, he said; think—he said that I must go with him freely!

Wangel. Only keep calm. Why, he's gone now, and you'll never see him again.

Ellida. Oh! how can you say that? He's coming again to-morrow night!

Wangel. Let him come. He shall not meet you again in any case.

Ellida (*shaking her head*). Ah, Wangel! do not believe you can prevent him.

Wangel. I can, dearest; only trust me.

Ellida (*pondering, and not listening to him*). Now when he's been here to-morrow night—and then when he has gone over seas in the steamer—

Wangel. Yes; what then?

Ellida. I should like to know if he will never, never come back again.

Wangel. No, dear Ellida. You may be quite sure of that. What should he do here after this? Now that he has learnt from your own lips that you will have nothing more to do with him. With that the whole thing is over.

Ellida (*to herself*). To-morrow, then, or never!

Wangel. And should it ever occur to him to come here again—

Ellida. Well?

Wangel. Why, then, it is in our power to make him harmless.

Ellida. Oh! do not think that!

Wangel. It is in our power, I tell you. If you can get rid of him in no other way, he must expiate the murder of the captain.

Ellida (*passionately*). No, no, no! Never that! We

know nothing about the murder of the captain! Nothing whatever!

Wangel. Know nothing? Why he himself confessed it to you!

Ellida. No, nothing of that. If you say anything of it I shall deny it. He shall not be imprisoned. He belongs out there—to the open sea. He belongs out there!

Wangel (*looks at her and says slowly*). Ah! Ellida—Ellida!

Ellida (*clinging passionately to him*). Oh! dear, faithful one—save me from this man!

Wangel (*disengaging himself gently*). Come, come with me!

(LYNGSTRAND *and* HILDE, *both with fishing tackle, come in from the right, along the pond.*)

Lyngstrand (*going quickly up to* ELLIDA). Now, Mrs. Wangel, you must hear something wonderful.

Wangel. What is it?

Lyngstrand. Fancy! We've seen the American!

Wangel. The American?

Hilde. Yes, I saw him, too.

Lyngstrand. He was going round the back of the garden, and thence on board the great English steamer.

Wangel. How do you know the man?

Lyngstrand. Why, I went to sea with him once. I felt so certain he'd been drowned—and now he's very much alive?

Wangel. Do you know anything more about him?

Lyngstrand. No. But I'm sure he's come to revenge himself upon his faithless sailor-wife.

Wangel. What do you mean?

Hilde. Lyngstrand's going to use him for a work of art.

Wangel. I don't understand one word.

Ellida. You shall hear afterwards.

(ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTE *come from the left along the footpath outside the garden.*)

Bolette (*to those in the garden*). Do come and see! The great English steamer's just going up the fjord.

(*A large steamer glides slowly past in the distance.*)

Lyngstrand (*to* HILDE *behind the garden fence*). To-night he's sure to come to her.

Hilde (*nods*). To the faithless sailor-wife—yes.

Lyngstrand. Fancy, at midnight!

Hilde. That must be so fascinating.

Ellida (*looking after the ship*). To-morrow, then!

Wangel. And then never again.

Ellida (*in a low, imploring tone*). Oh! Wangel, save me from myself!

Wangel (*looks anxiously at her*). Ellida—I feel there is something behind this—

Ellida. There is—the temptation!

Wangel. Temptation?

Ellida. The man is like the sea!

(*She goes slowly and thoughtfully through the garden, and out to the left.* WANGEL *walks uneasily by her side, watching her closely.*)

ACT IV

SCENE.—DOCTOR WANGEL'S *garden-room. Doors right and left. In the background, between the windows, an open glass door, leading out on to the verandah. Below this a portion of the garden is visible. A sofa and table down left. To the right a piano, and farther back a large flower-stand. In the middle of the room a round table, with chairs. On the table is a rose-tree in bloom, and other plants round it. Morning.*

In the room, by the table, BOLETTE *is sitting on the sofa, busy with some embroidery.* LYNGSTRAND *is seated on a chair at the upper end of the table. In the garden below* BALLESTED *sits painting.* HILDE *stands by watching him.*)

Lyngstrand (*with his arms on the table, sits silent awhile, looking at* BOLETTE'S *work*). It must be awfully difficult to do a border like that, Miss Wangel?

Bolette. Oh, no! It's not very difficult, if only you take care to count right.

Lyngstrand. To count? Must you count, too?

Bolette. Yes, the stitches. See!

Lyngstrand. So you do! Just fancy! Why, it's almost a kind of art. Can you design, too?

Bolette. Oh, yes! When I've a copy.

Lyngstrand. Not unless?

Bolette. No.

Lyngstrand. Well, then, after all, it's not a real art?

Bolette. No; it is rather only a sort of—handicraft.

Lyngstrand. But still, I think that perhaps you could learn art.

Bolette. If I haven't any talent?

Lyngstrand. Yes; if you could always be with a real true artist—

Bolette. Do you think, then, I could learn it from him?

Lyngstrand. Not exactly learn in the ordinary sense; but I think it would grow upon you little by little—by a kind of miracle as it were, Miss Wangel.

Bolette. That would be wonderful.

Lyngstrand (after a pause). Have you ever thought about—I mean, have you ever thought deeply and earnestly about marriage, Miss Wangel?

Bolette (looking quickly at him). About—no?

Lyngstrand. I have.

Bolette. Really? Have you?

Lyngstrand. Oh yes! I often think about things of that sort, especially about marriage; and, besides, I've read several books about it. I think marriage must be counted a sort of miracle;—that a woman should gradually change till she is like her husband.

Bolette. You mean has like interests?

Lyngstrand. Yes, that's it.

Bolette. Well, but his abilities,—his talents,—and his skill?

Lyngstrand. Hm—well—I should like to know if all that too—

Bolette. Then, perhaps, you also believe that everything a man has read for himself, and thought out for himself, that this, too, can grow upon his wife?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I think it can. Little by little; as by a sort of miracle. But, of course, I know such things can only happen in a marriage that is faithful, and loving, and really happy.

Bolette. Has it never occurred to you that a man, too, might, perhaps, be thus drawn over to his wife? Grow like her, I mean.

Lyngstrand. A man? No, I never thought of that.

Bolette. But why not one as well as the other?

Lyngstrand. No; for a man has a calling that he lives for; and *that's* what makes a man so strong and firm, Miss Wangel. He has a calling in life.

Bolette. Has every man?

Lyngstrand. Oh no! I am thinking more especially of artists.

Bolette. Do you think it right of an artist to get married?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I think so. If he can find one he can heartily love, I—

Bolette. Still, I think he should rather live for his art alone.

Lyngstrand. Of course he must; but he can do that just as well, even if he marries.

Bolette. But how about her.

Lyngstrand. Her? Who?

Bolette. She whom he marries. What is she to live for?

Lyngstrand. She, too, is to live for his art. It seems to me a woman must feel so thoroughly happy in *that.*

Bolette. Hm, I don't exactly know—

Lyngstrand. Yes, Miss Wangel, you may be sure of that. It is not merely all the honour and respect she enjoys through him; for that seems almost the least important to me. But it is this—that she can help him to create, that she can lighten his work for him, be about him and see to his comfort, and tend him well, and make his life thoroughly pleasant. I should think that must be perfectly delightful to a woman.

Bolette. Ah! you don't yourself know how selfish you are!

Lyngstrand. I, selfish! Good heavens! Oh, if only you knew me a little better than you do! (*Bending closer to her.*) Miss Wangel, when once I am gone—and that will be very soon now—

Bolette (*looks pityingly at him*). Oh, don't think of anything so sad!

Lyngstrand. But, really, I don't think it is so very sad.

Bolette. What do you mean?

Lyngstrand. Well, you know that I set out in a month. First from here, and then, of course, I'm going south.

Bolette. Oh, I see! Of course.

Lyngstrand. Will you think of me sometimes, then, Miss Wangel?

Bolette. Yes, gladly.

Lyngstrand (*pleased*). No, promise?

Bolette. I promise.

Lyngstrand. By all that is sacred, Miss Bolette?

Bolette. By all that is sacred. (*In a changed manner.*) Oh, but what can come of it all? Nothing on earth can come of it!

Lyngstrand. How can you say that! It would be so delightful for me to know you were at home here thinking of me!

Bolette. Well, and what else?

Lyngstrand. I don't exactly know of anything else.

Bolette. Nor I either. There are so many things in the way. Everything stands in the way, I think.

Lyngstrand. Oh, another miracle might come about. Some happy dispensation of fortune, or something of the sort; for I really believe I shall be lucky now.

Bolette (*eagerly*). Really? You do believe that?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I believe it thoroughly. And so—after a few years—when I come home again as a celebrated sculptor, and well off, and in perfect health—

Bolette. Yes, yes! Of course, we will hope so.

Lyngstrand. You may be perfectly certain about it. Only think faithfully and kindly of me when I am down

there in the south; and now I have your word that you will.

Bolette. You have (*shaking her head*). But, all the same, nothing will surely come of it.

Lyngstrand. Oh! yes, Miss Bolette. At least this will come of it. I shall get on so much more easily and quickly with my art work.

Bolette. Do you believe that, too?

Lyngstrand. I have an inner conviction of it. And I fancy it will be so cheering for you, too—here in this out-of-the way place—to know within yourself that you are, so to say, helping me to create.

Bolette (*looking at him*). Well; but you on your side?

Lyngstrand. I?

Bolette (*looking out into the garden*). Hush! Let us speak of something else. Here's Mr. Arnholm.

(ARNHOLM *is seen in the garden below. He stops and talks to* HILDE *and* BALLESTED.)

Lyngstrand. Are you fond of your old teacher, Miss Bolette?

Bolette. Fond of him?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I mean do you care for him?

Bolette. Yes, indeed I do, for he is a true friend—and adviser, too—and then he is always so ready to help when he can.

Lyngstrand. Isn't it extraordinary that he hasn't married.

Bolette. Do you think it is extraordinary?

Lyngstrand. Yes, for you say he's well-to-do.

Bolette. He is certainly said to be so. But probably it wasn't so easy to find anyone who'd have him.

Lyngstrand. Why?

Bolette. Oh! He's been the teacher of nearly all the young girls that he knows. He says that himself.

Lyngstrand. But what does that matter?

Bolette. Why, good heavens! One doesn't marry a man who's been your teacher!

Lyngstrand. Don't you think a young girl might love her teacher?

Bolette. Not after she's really grown up.

Lyngstrand. No—fancy that!

Bolette (*cautioning him*). Sh! sh!

(*Meanwhile* BALLESTED *has been gathering together his things, and carries them out from the garden to the right.* HILDE *helps him.* ARNHOLM *goes up the verandah, and comes into the room.*)

Arnholm. Good-morning, my dear Bolette. Good-morning Mr.—Mr.—hm —

(*He looks displeased, and nods coldly to* LYNGSTRAND, *who rises.*)

Bolette (*rising up and going up to* ARNHOLM). Good-morning, Mr. Arnholm.

Arnholm. Everything all right here to-day?

Bolette. Yes, thanks, quite.

Arnholm. Has your stepmother gone to bathe again to-day?

Bolette. No. She is upstairs in her room.

Arnholm. Not very bright?

Bolette. I don't know, for she has locked herself in.

Arnholm. Hm—has she?

Lyngstrand. I suppose Mrs. Wangel was very much frightened about that American yesterday?

Arnholm. What do *you* know about that?

Lyngstrand. I told Mrs. Wangel that I had seen him in the flesh behind the garden.

Arnholm. Oh! I see.

Bolette (*to* ARNHOLM). No doubt you and father sat up very late last night, talking?

Arnholm. Yes; rather late. We were talking over serious matters.

Bolette. Did you put in a word for me, and my affairs, too?

Arnholm. No, dear Bolette, I couldn't manage it. He was so completely taken up with something else.

Bolette (*sighs*). Ah! yes; he always is.

Arnholm (*looks at her meaningly*). But later on to-day we'll talk more fully about—the matter. Where's your father now? Not at home?

Bolette. Yes, he is. He must be down in the office. I'll fetch him.

Arnholm. No, thanks. Don't do that. I'd rather go down to him.

Bolette (*listening*). Wait one moment, Mr. Arnholm; I believe that's father on the stairs. Yes. I suppose he's been up to look after her.

(WANGEL *comes in from the door on the left.*)

Wangel (*shaking* ARNHOLM'S *hand*). What, dear friend, are you here already? It was good of you to come so early, for I should like to talk a little further with you.

Bolette (*to* LYNGSTRAND). Hadn't we better go down to Hilde in the garden?

Lyngstrand. I shall be delighted, Miss Wangel.

(*He and* BOLETTE *go down into the garden, and pass out between the trees in the background.*)

Arnholm (*following them with his eyes, turns to* WANGEL). Do you know anything about that young man?

Wangel. No, nothing at all.

Arnholm. But do you think it right he should knock about so much with the girls?

Wangel. Does he? I really hadn't noticed it.

Arnholm. You ought to see to it, I think.

Wangel. Yes, I suppose you're right. But, good Lord! what's a man to do? The girls are so accustomed to look after themselves now. They won't listen to me, nor to Ellida.

Arnholm. Not to her either?

Wangel. No; and besides I really cannot expect Ellida to trouble about such things. She's not fit for that (*breaking off*). But it wasn't *that* which we were to talk of. Now tell me, have you thought the matter over—thought over all I told you of?

Arnholm. I have thought of nothing else ever since we parted last night.

Wangel. And what do you think should be done?

Arnholm. Dear Wangel, I think you, as a doctor, must know that better than I.

Wangel. Oh! if you only knew how difficult it is for a doctor to judge rightly about a patient who is so dear

to him! Besides, this is no ordinary illness. No ordinary doctor and no ordinary medicines can help her.

Arnholm. How is she to-day?

Wangel. I was upstairs with her just now, and then she seemed to me quite calm; but behind all her moods something lies hidden which it is impossible for me to fathom; and then she is so changeable, so capricious—she varies so suddenly.

Arnholm. No doubt that is the result of her morbid state of mind.

Wangel. Not altogether. When you go down to the bed-rock, it was born in her. Ellida belongs to the sea-folk. That is the matter.

Arnholm. What do you really mean, my dear doctor?

Wangel. Haven't you noticed that the people from out there by the open sea are, in a way, a people apart? It is almost as if they themselves lived the life of the sea. There is the rush of waves, and ebb and flow too, both in their thoughts and in their feelings, and so they can never bear transplanting. Oh! I ought to have remembered that. It was a sin against Ellida to take her away from there, and bring her here.

Arnholm. You have come to that opinion?

Wangel. Yes, more and more. But I ought to have told myself this beforehand. Oh! I knew it well enough at bottom! But I put it from me. For, you see, I loved her so! Therefore I thought of myself first of all. I was inexcusably selfish at that time!

Arnholm. Hm. I suppose every man is a little selfish under such circumstances. Moreover, I've never noticed that vice in you, Doctor Wangel.

Wangel (*walks uneasily about the room*). Oh, yes! And I have been since then, too. Why, I am so much, much older than she is. I ought to have been at once as a father to her and a guide. I ought to have done my best to develop and enlighten her mind. Unfortunately nothing ever came of that. You see, I hadn't stamina enough, for I preferred her just as she was. So things went worse and worse with her, and

then I didn't know what to do. (*In a lower voice.*) That was why I wrote to you in my trouble, and asked you to come here.

Arnholm (*looks at him in astonishment*). What, was it for this you wrote?

Wangel. Yes; but don't let anyone notice anything.

Arnholm. How on earth, dear doctor—what good did you expect me to be? I don't understand it.

Wangel. No, naturally. For I was on an altogether false track. I thought Ellida's heart had at one time gone out to you, and that she still secretly cared for you a little—that perhaps it would do her good to see you again, and talk of her home and the old days.

Arnholm. So it was your wife you meant when you wrote that she expected me, and—and perhaps longed for me.

Wangel. Yes, who else?

Arnholm (*hurriedly*). No, no. You're right. But I didn't understand.

Wangel. Naturally, as I said, for I was on an absolutely wrong track.

Arnholm And you call yourself selfish!

Wangel. Ah! but I had such a great sin to atone for. I felt I dared not neglect any means that might give the slightest relief to her mind.

Arnholm. How do you really explain the power this stranger exercises over her?

Wangel. Hm—dear friend—there may be sides to the matter that *cannot* be explained.

Arnholm. Do you mean anything inexplicable in itself—absolutely inexplicable?

Wangel. In any case not explicable as far as we know.

Arnholm. Do you believe there is something in it, then?

Wangel. I neither believe nor deny; I simply don't know. That's why I leave it alone.

Arnholm. Yes. But just one thing: her extraordinary, weird assertion about the child's eyes—

Wangel (*eagerly*). I don't believe a word about the

eyes. I *will* not believe such a thing. It must be purely fancy on her part, nothing else.

Arnholm. Did you notice the man's eyes when you saw him yesterday?

Wangel. Of course I did.

Arnholm. And you saw no sort of resemblance?

Wangel (*evasively*). Hm—good heavens! What shall I say? It wasn't quite light when I saw him; and, besides, Ellida had been saying so much about this resemblance, I really don't know if I was capable of observing quite impartially.

Arnholm. Well, well, may be. But that other matter? All this terror and unrest coming upon her at the very time, as it seems, this strange man was on his way home.

Wangel. That—oh! that's something she must have persuaded and dreamed herself into since it happened. She was not seized with this so suddenly—all at once—as she now maintains. But since she heard from young Lyngstrand that Johnston—or Friman, or whatever his name is—was on his way hither, three years ago, in the month of March, she now evidently believes her unrest of mind came upon her at that very time.

Arnholm. It was not so, then?

Wangel. By no means. There were signs and symptoms of it before this time, though it did happen, by chance, that in that month of March, three years ago, she had a rather severe attack.

Arnholm. After all, then—?

Wangel. Yes, but that is easily accounted for by the circumstances—the condition she happened to be in at the time.

Arnholm. So, symptom for symptom, then.

Wangel (*wringing his hands*). And not to be able to help her! Not to know how to counsel her! To see no way!

Arnholm. Now if you could make up your mind to leave this place, to go somewhere else, so that she could live amid surroundings that would seem more home-like to her?

Wangel. Ah, dear friend! Do you think I haven't

offered her that, too? I suggested moving out to Skjoldviken, but she will not.

Arnholm. Not that either?

Wangel. No, for she doesn't think it would be any good; and perhaps she's right.

Arnholm. Hm. Do you say that?

Wangel. Moreover, when I think it all over carefully, I really don't know how I could manage it. I don't think I should be justified, for the sake of the girls, in going away to such a desolate place. After all, they must live where there is at least a prospect of their being provided for some day.

Arnholm. Provided for! Are you thinking about that already?

Wangel. Heaven knows, I must think of that too! But then, on the other hand, again, my poor sick Ellida! Oh, dear Arnholm! in many respects I seem to be standing between fire and water!

Arnholm. Perhaps you've no need to worry on Bolette's account. (*Breaking off.*) I should like to know where she—where they have gone. (*Goes up to the open door and looks out.*)

Wangel. Oh, I would so gladly make any sacrifice for all three of them, if only I knew what!

(ELLIDA *enters from the door on the left.*)

Ellida (*quickly to* WANGEL). Be sure you don't go out this morning.

Wangel. No, no! of course not. I will stay at home with you. (*Pointing to* ARNHOLM, *who is coming towards them.*) But won't you speak to our friend?

Ellida (*turning*). Oh, are you here, Mr. Arnholm? (*Holding out her hand to him.*) Good-morning.

Arnholm. Good-morning, Mrs. Wangel. So you've not been bathing as usual to-day?

Ellida. No, no, no! That is out of the question to-day. But won't you sit down a moment?

Arnholm. No, thanks, not now. (*Looks at* WANGEL.) I promised the girls to go down to them in the garden.

Ellida. Goodness knows if you'll find them there. I never know where they may be rambling.

Wangel. They're sure to be down by the pond.

Arnholm. Oh! I shall find them right enough. (*Nods, and goes out across the verandah into the garden.*)

Ellida. What time is it, Wangel?

Wangel (*looking at his watch*). A little past eleven.

Ellida. A little past. And at eleven o'clock, or half-past eleven to-night, the steamer is coming. If only that were over!

Wangel (*going nearer to her*). Dear Ellida, there is one thing I should like to ask you.

Ellida. What is it?

Wangel. The evening before last—up at the "View"—you said that during the last three years you had so often seen him bodily before you.

Ellida. And so I have. You may believe that.

Wangel. But, how did you see him?

Ellida. How did I see him?

Wangel. I mean, how did he look when you thought you saw him?

Ellida. But, dear Wangel, why you now know yourself how he looks.

Wangel. Did he look exactly like that in your imagination?

Ellida. He did.

Wangel. Exactly the same as you saw him in reality yesterday evening?

Ellida. Yes, exactly.

Wangel. Then how was it you did not at once recognise him?

Ellida. Did I not?

Wangel. No; you said yourself afterwards that at first you did not at all know who the strange man was.

Ellida (*perplexed*). I really believe you are right. Don't you think that strange, Wangel? Fancy my not knowing him at once!

Wangel. It was only the eyes, you said.

Ellida. Oh, yes! The eyes—the eyes.

Wangel. Well, but at the "View" you said that he

always appeared to you exactly as he was when you parted out there—ten years ago.

Ellida. Did I?

Wangel. Yes.

Ellida. Then, I suppose he did look much as he does now.

Wangel. No. On our way home, the day before yesterday, you gave quite another description of him. Ten years ago he had no beard, you said. His dress, too, was quite different. And that breast-pin with the pearl? That man yesterday wore nothing of the sort.

Ellida. No he did not.

Wangel (*looks searchingly at her*). Now just think a little, dear Ellida. Or perhaps you can't quite remember how he looked when he stood by you at Bratthamer?

Ellida (*thoughtfully closing her eyes for a moment*). Not quite distinctly. No, to-day I can't. Is it not strange?

Wangel. Not so very strange after all. You have now been confronted by a new and real image, and that overshadows the old one, so that you can no longer see it.

Ellida. Do you believe that, Wangel?

Wangel. Yes. And it overshadows your sick imaginings, too. That is why it is good a reality has come.

Ellida. Good? Do you think it good?

Wangel. Yes. That it has come. It may restore you to health.

Ellida (*sitting down on sofa*). Wangel, come and sit down by me. I must tell you all my thoughts.

Wangel. Yes, do, dear Ellida.

(*He sits down on a chair on the other side of the table.*)

Ellida. It was really a great misfortune—for us both—that we two of all people should have come together.

Wangel (*amazed*). What are you saying?

Ellida. Oh, yes, it was. And it's so natural. It could bring nothing but unhappiness, after the way in which we came together.

Wangel. What was there in that way?

Ellida. Listen, Wangel; it's no use going on, lying to ourselves and to one another.

Wangel. Are we doing so? Lying, you say?

Ellida. Yes, we are; or, at least, we suppress the truth. For the truth—the pure and simple truth is—that you came out there and bought me.

Wangel. Bought—you say bought!

Ellida. Oh! I wasn't a bit better than you. I accepted the bargain. Sold myself to you!

Wangel (*looks at her full of pain*). Ellida, have you really the heart to call it that?

Ellida. But is there any other name for it? You could no longer bear the emptiness of your house. You were on the look-out for a new wife.

Wangel. And a new mother for the children, Ellida.

Ellida. That too, perhaps, by the way; although you didn't in the least know if I were fit for the position. Why, you had only seen me, and spoken to me a few times. Then you wanted me, and so—

Wangel. Yes, you may call it as you will.

Ellida. And I, on my side—why, I was so helpless and bewildered, and so absolutely alone. Oh! it was so natural I should accept the bargain, when you came and proposed to provide for me all my life.

Wangel. Assuredly it did not seem to me a providing for you, dear Ellida. I asked you honestly if you would share with me and the children the little I could call my own.

Ellida. Yes, you did; but all the same, I should never have accepted! Never have accepted that at any price! Not sold myself! Better the meanest work—better the poorest life—after one's own choice.

Wangel (*rising*). Then have the five—six years that we have lived together been so utterly worthless to you?

Ellida. Oh! Don't think that, Wangel. I have been as well cared for here as human being could desire. But I did not enter your house freely. That is the thing.

Wangel (*looking at her*). Not freely!

Ellida. No. It was not freely that I went with you.

Wangel (*in subdued tone*). Ah! I remember your words of yesterday.

Ellida. It all lies in those words. They have enlightened me; and so I see it all now.

Wangel. What do you see?

Ellida. I see that the life we two live together—is really no marriage.

Wangel (*bitterly*). You have spoken truly there. The life we *now* live is not a marriage.

Ellida. Nor was it formerly. Never—not from the very first (*looks straight in front of her*). The first—that might have been a complete and real marriage.

Wangel. The first—what do you mean?

Ellida. Mine—with him.

Wangel (*looks at her in astonishment*). I do not in the least understand you.

Ellida. Ah! dear Wangel, let us not lie to one another, nor to ourselves.

Wangel. Well—what more?

Ellida. You see—we can never get away from that one thing—that a freely given promise is fully as binding as a marriage.

Wangel. But what on earth—

Ellida (*rising impetuously*). Set me free, Wangel!

Wangel. Ellida! Ellida!

Ellida. Yes, yes! Oh! grant me that! Believe me, it will come to that all the same—after the way we two came together.

Wangel (*conquering his pain*). It has come to this, then?

Ellida. It has come to this. It could not be otherwise.

Wangel (*looking gloomily at her*). So I have not won you by our living together. Never, never possessed you quite.

Ellida. Ah! Wangel—if only I could love you, how gladly I would—as dearly as you deserve. But I feel it so well—that will never be.

Wangel. Divorce, then? It is a divorce, a complete, legal divorce that you want?

Ellida. Dear, you understand me so little! I care nothing for such formalities. Such outer things matter

nothing, I think. What I want is that we should, of our own free will, release each other.

Wangel (*bitterly, nods slowly*). To cry off the bargain again—yes.

Ellida (*quickly*). Exactly. To cry off the bargain.

Wangel. And then, Ellida? Afterwards? Have you reflected what life would be to both of us? What life would be to both you and me?

Ellida. No matter. Things must turn out afterwards as they may. What I beg and implore of you, Wangel, is the most important. Only set me free! Give me back my complete freedom!

Wangel. Ellida, it is a fearful thing you ask of me. At least give me time to collect myself before I come to a decision. Let us talk it over more carefully. And you yourself—take time to consider what you are doing.

Ellida. But we have no time to lose with such matters. I must have my freedom again to-day.

Wangel. Why to-day?

Ellida. Because he is coming to-night.

Wangel (*starts*). Coming! He! What has this stranger to do with it?

Ellida. I want to face him in perfect freedom.

Wangel. And what—what else do you intend to do?

Ellida. I will not hide behind the fact that I am the wife of another man; nor make the excuse that I have no choice, for then it would be no decision.

Wangel. You speak of a choice. Choice, Ellida! A choice in such a matter!

Ellida. Yes, I must be free to choose—to choose for either side. I must be able to let him go away—alone, or to go with him.

Wangel. Do you know what you are saying? Go with him—give your whole life into his hands!

Ellida. Didn't I give my life into *your* hands, and without any ado?

Wangel. Maybe. But he! He! an absolute stranger! A man of whom you know so little!

Ellida. Ah! but after all I knew you even less; and yet I went with you.

Wangel. Then you knew to some extent what life lay before you. But now? Think! What do you know? You know absolutely nothing. Not even who or what he is.

Ellida (*looking in front of her*). That is true; but that is the terror.

Wangel. Yes, indeed, it is terrible!

Ellida. That is why I feel I must plunge into it.

Wangel (*looking at her*). Because it seems terrible?

Ellida. Yes; because of that.

Wangel (*coming closer*). Listen, Ellida. What do you really mean by terrible?

Ellida (*reflectively*). The terrible is that which repels and attracts.

Wangel. Attracts, you say?

Ellida. Attracts most of all, I think.

Wangel (*slowly*). You are one with the sea.

Ellida. That, too, is a terror.

Wangel. And that terror is in you. You both repel and attract.

Ellida. Do you think so, Wangel?

Wangel. After all, I have never really known you—never really. Now I am beginning to understand.

Ellida. And that is why you must set me free! Free me from every bond to you—and yours. I am not what you took me for. Now you see it yourself. Now we can part as friends—and freely.

Wangel (*sadly*). Perhaps it would be better for us both if we parted— And yet, I cannot! You are the terror to me, Ellida; the attraction is what is strongest in you.

Ellida. Do you say that?

Wangel. Let us try and live through this day wisely—in perfect quiet of mind. I dare not set you free, and release you to-day. I have no right to. No right for your own sake, Ellida. I exercise my right and my duty to protect you.

Ellida. Protect? What is there to protect me from? I am not threatened by any outward power. The terror

lies deeper, Wangel. The terror is—the attraction in my own mind. And what can you do against that?

Wangel. I can strengthen and urge you to fight against it.

Ellida. Yes; if I *wished* to fight against it.

Wangel. Then you do not wish to?

Ellida. Oh! I don't know myself.

Wangel. To-night all will be decided, dear Ellida—

Ellida (*bursting out*). Yes, think! The decision so near—the decision for one's whole life!

Wangel. And then to-morrow—

Ellida. To-morrow! Perhaps my real future will have been ruined.

Wangel. Your real—

Ellida. The whole, full life of freedom lost—lost for me, and perhaps for him also.

Wangel (*in a lower tone, seizing her wrist*). Ellida, do you love this stranger?

Ellida. Do I? Oh, how can I tell! I only know that to me he is a terror, and that—

Wangel. And that—

Ellida (*tearing herself away*). And that it is to him I think I belong.

Wangel (*bowing his head*). I begin to understand better.

Ellida. And what remedy have you for that? What advice to give me?

Wangel (*looking sadly at her*). To-morrow he will be gone, then the misfortune will be averted from your head; and then I will consent to set you free. We will cry off the bargain to-morrow, Ellida.

Ellida. Ah, Wangel, to-morrow! that is too late.

Wangel (*looking towards garden*). The children—the children! Let us spare them, at least for the present.

(ARNHOLM, BOLETTE, HILDE, *and* LYNGSTRAND *come into the garden.* LYNGSTRAND *says good-bye in the garden, and goes out. The rest come into the room.*)

Arnholm. You must know we have been making plans.

Hilde. We're going out to the fjord to-night and—

Bolette. No; you mustn't tell.

Wangel. We two, also, have been making plans.

Arnholm. Ah!—really?

Wangel. To-morrow Ellida is going away to Skjoldviken for a time.

Bolette. Going away?

Arnholm. Now, look here, that's very sensible, Mrs. Wangel.

Wangel. Ellida wants to go home again—home to the sea.

Hilde (*springing towards* ELLIDA). You are going away—away from us?

Ellida (*frightened*). Hilde! What is the matter?

Hilde (*controlling herself*). Oh, it's nothing. (*In a low voice turning from her.*) Are only you going?

Bolette (*anxiously*). Father,—I see it;—*you*, too, are going—to Skjoldviken!

Wangel. No, no! Perhaps I shall run out there every now and again.

Bolette. And come here to us?

Wangel. I will—

Bolette. Every now and again!

Wangel. Dear child, it must be.

(*He crosses the room.*)

Arnholm (*whispers*). We will talk it over later, Bolette. (*He crosses to* WANGEL. *They speak in low tones up stage by the door.*)

Ellida (*aside to* BOLETTE). What was the matter with Hilde? She looked quite scared.

Bolette. Have you never noticed what Hilde goes about here, day in, day out, hungering for?

Ellida. Hungering for?

Bolette. Ever since you came into the house?

Ellida. No, no. What is it?

Bolette. One loving word from you.

Ellida. Oh! If there should be something for me to do *here!*

(*She clasps her hands together over her head, and looks fixedly in front of her, as if torn by contending*

thoughts and emotions. WANGEL *and* ARNHOLM *come across the room whispering.* BOLETTE *goes to the side room, and looks in. Then she throws open the door.*)

Bolette. Father, dear—the table is laid—if you—

Wangel (*with forced composure*). Is it, child? That's well. Come, Arnholm! We'll go in and drink a farewell cup—with the "Lady from the Sea."

(*They go out through the right.*)

ACT V

(SCENE.—*The distant part of* DOCTOR WANGEL'S *garden, and the carp pond. The summer night gradually darkens.* ARNHOLM, BOLETTE, LYNGSTRAND *and* HILDE *are in a boat, punting along the shore to the left.*)

Hilde. See! We can jump ashore easily here.

Arnholm. No, no; don't!

Lyngstrand. I can't jump, Miss Hilde.

Hilde. Can't you jump either, Arnholm?

Arnholm. I'd rather not try.

Bolette. Then let's land down there, by the bathing steps.

(*They push off. At the same moment* BALLESTED *comes along the footpath, carrying music-books and a French horn. He bows to those in the boat, turns and speaks to them. The answers are heard farther and farther away.*)

Ballested. What do you say? Yes, of course it's on account of the English steamer; for this is her last visit here this year. But if you want to enjoy the pleasures of melody, you mustn't wait too long. (*Calling out.*) What? (*Shaking his head.*) Can't hear what you say!

(ELLIDA, *with a shawl over her head, enters, followed by* Doctor WANGEL.)

Wangel. But, dear Ellida, I assure you there's plenty of time.

Ellida. No, no, there is not! He may come any moment.

Ballested (*outside the fence*). Hallo! Good-evening, doctor! Good-evening, Mrs. Wangel.

Wangel (*noticing him*). Oh! is it you? Is there to be music to-night?

Ballested. Yes; the Wind Band Society thought of making themselves heard. We've no dearth of festive occasions nowadays. To-night it's in honour of the English ship.

Ellida. The English ship! Is she in sight already?

Ballested. Not yet. But you know she comes from between the islands. You can't see anything of her, and then she's alongside of you.

Ellida. Yes, that is so.

Wangel (*half to* ELLIDA). To-night is the last voyage, then she will not come again.

Ballested. A sad thought, doctor, and that's why we're going to give them an ovation, as the saying is. Ah! yes!—ah! yes. The glad summer-time will soon be over now. Soon all ways will be barred, as they say in the tragedy.

Ellida. All ways barred—yes!

Ballested. It's sad to think of. We have been the joyous children of summer for weeks and months now. It's hard to reconcile yourself to the dark days—just at first, I mean. For men *can* accli—a—acclimatise themselves, Mrs. Wangel. Ay, indeed they can. (*Bows, and goes off to the left*).

Ellida (*looking out at the fjord*). Oh, this terrible suspense! This torturing last half-hour before the decision.

Wangel. You are determined, then, to speak to him yourself?

Ellida. I must speak to him myself; for it is freely that I must make my choice.

Wangel. You have no choice, Ellida. You have no right to choose—no right without my permission.

Ellida. You can never prevent the choice, neither you nor anyone. You can forbid me to go away with him—to follow him—in case I should choose to do that. You can keep me here by force—against my will. That you can do. But that I should choose, choose

from my very soul—choose him, and not you—in case I would and did choose thus—this you cannot prevent.

Wangel. No; you are right. I cannot prevent that.

Ellida. And so I have nothing to help me to resist. Here, at home, there is no single thing that attracts me and binds me. I am so absolutely rootless in your house, Wangel. The children are not mine—their hearts, I mean—never have been. When I go, if I do go, either with him to-night, or to Skjoldviken to-morrow, I haven't a key to give up, an order to give about anything whatsoever. I am absolutely rootless in your house—I have been absolutely outside everything from the very first.

Wangel. You yourself wished it.

Ellida. No, no, I did not. I neither wished nor did not wish it. I simply left things just as I found them the day I came here. It is you, and no one else, who wished it.

Wangel. I thought to do all for the best for you.

Ellida. Yes, Wangel, I know it so well! But there is retribution in that, a something that avenges itself. For now I find no binding power here—nothing to strengthen me—nothing to help me—nothing to draw me towards what should have been the strongest possession of us both.

Wangel. I see it, Ellida. And that is why from to-morrow you shall have back your freedom. Henceforth you shall live your own life.

Ellida. And you call that my own life! No! My own true life lost its bearings when I agreed to live with you. (*Clenches her hand in fear and unrest.*) And now—to-night—in half an hour, he whom I forsook is coming—he to whom I should have cleaved for ever, even as he has cleaved to me! Now he is coming to offer me—for the last and only time—the chance of living my life over again, of living my own true life—the life that terrifies and attracts—and I *can* not forego that—not freely.

Wangel. That is why it is necessary your husband—and your doctor—should take the power of acting from you, and act on your behalf.

Ellida. Yes, Wangel, I quite understand. Believe me, there are times when I think it would be peace and deliverance if with all my soul I could be bound to you —and try to brave all that terrifies—and attracts. But I cannot! No, no, I cannot do that!

Wangel. Come, Ellida, let us walk up and down together for a while.

Ellida. I would gladly—but I dare not. For he said I was to wait for him here.

Wangel. Come! There is time enough.

Ellida. Do you think so?

Wangel. Plenty of time, I tell you.

Ellida. Then let us go, for a little while.

(*They pass out in the foreground. At the same time* ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTE *appear by the upper bank of the pond.*)

Bolette (*noticing the two as they go out*). See there—

Arnholm (*in low voice*). Hush! Let them go.

Bolette. Can you understand what has been going on between them these last few days?

Arnholm. Have you noticed anything?

Bolette. Have I not!

Arnholm. Anything peculiar?

Bolette. Yes, one thing and another. Haven't you?

Arnholm. Well—I don't exactly know.

Bolette. Yes, you have; only you won't speak out about it.

Arnholm. I think it will do your stepmother good to go on this little journey.

Bolette. Do you think so?

Arnholm. I should say it would be well for all parties that she should get away every now and then.

Bolette. If she does go home to Skjoldviken to-morrow, she will never come back again to here!

Arnholm. My dear Bolette, whatever makes you think that?

Bolette. I am quite convinced of it. Just you wait; you'll see that she'll not come back again; not anyhow as long as I and Hilde are in the house here.

Arnholm. Hilde, too?

Bolette. Well, it might perhaps be all right with Hilde. For she is scarcely more than a child. And I believe that at bottom she worships Ellida. But, you see, it's different with me—a stepmother who isn't so very much older than oneself!

Arnholm. Dear Bolette, perhaps it might, after all, not be so very long before you left.

Bolette (*eagerly*). Really! Have you spoken to father about it?

Arnholm. Yes, I have.

Bolette. Well, what does he say?

Arnholm. Hm! Well, your father's so thoroughly taken up with other matters just now—

Bolette. Yes, yes! that's how I knew it would be.

Arnholm. But I got this much out of him. You mustn't reckon upon any help from him.

Bolette. No?

Arnholm. He explained his circumstances to me clearly; he thought that such a thing was absolutely out of the question, impossible for him.

Bolette (*reproachfully*). And you had the heart to come and mock me?

Arnholm. I've certainly not done that, dear Bolette. It depends wholly and solely upon yourself whether you go away or not.

Bolette. What depends upon me?

Arnholm. Whether you are to go out into the world—learn all you most care for—take part in all you are hungering after here at home—live your life under brighter conditions, Bolette.

Bolette (*clasping her hands together*). Good God! But it's impossible! If father neither can nor will—and I have no one else on earth to whom I could turn—

Arnholm. Couldn't you make up your mind to accept a little help from your old—from your former teacher?

Bolette. From you, Mr. Arnholm! Would you be willing to—

Arnholm. Stand by you! Yes—with all my heart.

Both with word and in deed. You may count upon it. Then you accept? Well? Do you agree?

Bolette. Do I agree! To get away—to see the world—to learn something thoroughly! All that seemed to be a great, beautiful impossibility!

Arnholm. All that may now become a reality to you, if only you yourself wish it.

Bolette. And to all this unspeakable happiness you will help me! Oh, no! Tell me, *can* I accept such an offer from a stranger!

Arnholm. You can from me, Bolette. From me you can accept anything.

Bolette (*seizing his hands*). Yes, I almost think I can! I don't know how it is, but—(*bursting out*) Oh! I could both laugh and cry for joy, for happiness! Then I should know life really after all. I began to be so afraid life would pass me by.

Arnholm. You need not fear that, Bolette. But now you must tell me quite frankly—if there is anything—anything you are bound to here.

Bolette. Bound to? Nothing.

Arnholm. Nothing whatever?

Bolette. No, nothing at all. That is—I am bound to father to some extent. And to Hilde, too. But—

Arnholm. Well, you'll have to leave your father sooner or later. And some time Hilde also will go her own way in life. That is only a question of time. Nothing more. And so there is nothing else that binds you, Bolette. Not any kind of connection?

Bolette. Nothing whatever. As far as that goes, I could leave at any moment.

Arnholm. Well, if that is so, dear Bolette, you shall go away with me!

Bolette (*clapping her hands*). O God! what joy to think of it!

Arnholm. For I hope you trust me fully?

Bolette. Indeed, I do!

Arnholm. And you dare to trust yourself and your future fully and confidently into my hands, Bolette? Is that true? You will dare to do this?

Bolette. Of course; how could I not do so? Could you believe anything else? You, who have been my old teacher—my teacher in the old days, I mean.

Arnholm. Not because of that. I will not consider that side of the matter; but—well, so you are free, Bolette! There is nothing that binds you, and so I ask you, if you could—if you could—bind yourself to me for life?

Bolette (*steps back frightened*). What are you saying?

Arnholm. For all your life, Bolette. Will you be my wife?

Bolette (*half to herself*). No, no, no! That is impossible, utterly impossible!

Arnholm. It is really so absolutely impossible for you to—

Bolette. But, surely, you cannot mean what you are saying, Mr. Arnholm! (*Looking at him.*) Or—yet—was that what you meant when you offered to do so much for me?

Arnholm. You must listen to me one moment, Bolette. I suppose I have greatly surprised you!

Bolette. Oh! how could such a thing from you—how could it but—but surprise me!

Arnholm. Perhaps you are right. Of course, you didn't—you could not know it was for your sake I made this journey.

Bolette. Did you come here for—for my sake?

Arnholm. I did, Bolette. In the spring I received a letter from your father, and in it there was a passage that made me think—hm—that you held your former teacher in—in a little more than friendly remembrance.

Bolette. How could father write such a thing?

Arnholm. He did not mean it so. But I worked myself into the belief that here was a young girl longing for me to come again.—No, you mustn't interrupt me, dear Bolette! And—you see, when a man like myself, who is no longer quite young, has such a belief—or fancy, it makes an overwhelming impression. There grew within me a living, a grateful affection for you; I thought I must come to you, see you again, and tell

you I shared the feelings that I fancied you had for me.

Bolette. And now you know it is not so!—that it was a mistake!

Arnholm. It can't be helped, Bolette. Your image, as I bear it within myself, will always be coloured and stamped with the impression that this mistake gave me. Perhaps you cannot understand this; but still it is so.

Bolette. I never thought such a thing possible.

Arnholm. But now you have seen that it is possible, what do you say now, Bolette? Couldn't you make up your mind to be—yes—to be my wife?

Bolette. Oh! it seems so utterly impossible, Mr. Arnholm. You, who have been my teacher! I can't imagine ever standing in any other relation towards you.

Arnholm. Well, well, if you think you really cannot.—Then our old relations remain unchanged, dear Bolette.

Bolette. What do you mean?

Arnholm. Of course, to keep my promise all the same. I will take care you get out into the world, and see something of it. Learn some things you really want to know; live safe and independent. Your future I shall provide for also, Bolette. For in me you will always have a good, faithful, trustworthy friend. Be sure of that.

Bolette. Good heavens! Mr. Arnholm, all that is so utterly impossible now.

Arnholm. Is that impossible too?

Bolette. Surely you can see that! After what you have just said to me, and after my answer—Oh! you yourself must see that it is impossible for me now to accept so very much from you. I can accept nothing from you—nothing after this.

Arnholm. So you would rather stay at home here, and let life pass you by?

Bolette. Oh! it is such dreadful misery to think of that.

Arnholm. Will you renounce knowing something of the outer world? Renounce bearing your part in all that you yourself say you are hungering for? To know

there is so infinitely much, and yet never really to understand anything of it? Think carefully, Bolette.

Bolette. Yes, yes! You are right, Mr. Arnholm.

Arnholm. And then, when one day your father is no longer here, then perhaps to be left helpless and alone in the world; or live to give yourself to another man—whom you, perhaps, will also feel no affection for—

Bolette. Oh, yes! I see how true all you say is. But still—and yet perhaps—

Arnholm (*quickly*). Well.

Bolette (*looking at him hesitatingly*). Perhaps it might not be so impossible after all.

Arnholm. What, Bolette?

Bolette. Perhaps it might be possible—to accept—what you proposed to me.

Arnholm. Do you mean that, after all, you might be willing to—that at all events, you could give me the happiness of helping you as a steadfast friend?

Bolette. No, no, no. Never that, for that would be utterly impossible now. No — Mr. Arnholm—rather take me.

Arnholm. Bolette! You will?

Bolette. Yes, I believe I will.

Arnholm. And after all you will be my wife?

Bolette. Yes; if you still think that—that you will have me.

Arnholm. Think! (*Seizing her hand.*) Oh, thanks, thanks, Bolette. All else that you said—your former doubts—these do not frighten me. If I do not yet possess your whole heart, I shall know how to conquer it. Oh, Bolette, I will wait upon you hand and foot!

Bolette. And then I shall see something of the world? Shall live! You have promised me that?

Arnholm. And will keep my promise.

Bolette. And I may learn everything I want to?

Arnholm. I, myself, will be your teacher as formerly, Bolette. Do you remember the last school year?

Bolette (*quietly and absently*). To think—to know—one's self free, and to get out into the strange world,

and then, not to need to be anxious for the future—not to be harassed about one's stupid livelihood!

Arnholm. No, you will never need to waste a thought upon such matters. And that's a good thing, too, in its way, dear Bolette, isn't it? Eh?

Bolette. Indeed it is. That is certain.

Arnholm (*putting his arms about her*). Oh, you will see how comfortably and easily we shall settle down together! And how well, and safely, and trustfully we two shall get on with one another, Bolette.

Bolette. Yes. I also begin to—I believe really—it will answer (*Looks out to the right, and hurriedly frees herself*). Oh, don't say anything about this.

Arnholm. What is it, dear?

Bolette. Oh! it's that poor (*pointing*)—see out there.

Arnholm. Is it your father?

Bolette. No. It's the young sculptor. He's down there with Hilde.

Arnholm. Oh, Lyngstrand! What's really the matter with him?

Bolette. Why, you know how weak and delicate he is.

Arnholm. Yes. Unless it's simply imaginary.

Bolette. No, it's real enough! He'll not last long. But perhaps that's best for him.

Arnholm. Dear, why should *that* be best?

Bolette. Because—because—nothing would come of his art anyhow. Let's go before they come.

Arnholm. Gladly, my dear Bolette.

(HILDE *and* LYNGSTRAND *appear by the pond.*)

Hilde. Hi, hi! Won't your honours wait for us?

Arnholm. Bolette and I would rather go on a little in advance. (*He and* BOLETTE *go out to the left.*)

Lyngstrand (*laughs quietly*). It's very delightful here now. Everybody goes about in pairs—always two and two together.

Hilde (*looking after them*). I could almost swear he's proposing to her.

Lyngstrand. Really? Have you noticed anything?

Hilde. Yes. It's not very difficult—if you keep your eyes open.

Lyngstrand. But Miss Bolette won't have him. I'm certain of that.

Hilde. No. For she thinks he's got so dreadfully old-looking, and she thinks he'll soon get bald.

Lyngstrand. It's not only because of *that.* She'd not have him anyhow.

Hilde. How can you know?

Lyngstrand. Well, because there's someone else she's promised to think of.

Hilde. Only to think of?

Lyngstrand. While he is away, yes.

Hilde. Oh! then I suppose it's you she's to think of.

Lyngstrand. Perhaps it might be.

Hilde. She promised you that?

Lyngstrand. Yes — think — she promised me that! But mind you don't tell her you know.

Hilde. Oh! I'll be mum! I'm as secret as the grave.

Lyngstrand. I think it's awfully kind of her.

Hilde. And when you come home again—are you going to be engaged to her, and then marry her?

Lyngstrand. No, that wouldn't very well do. For I daren't think of such a thing during the first years. And when I shall be able to, she'll be rather too old for me, I fancy.

Hilde. And yet you wish her to think of you?

Lyngstrand. Yes; that's so useful to me. You see, I'm an artist. And she can very well do it, because she herself has no real calling. But all the same, it's kind of her.

Hilde. Do you think you'll be able to get on more quickly with your work if you know that Bolette is here thinking of you?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I fancy so. To know there is a spot on earth where a young, gentle, reserved woman is quietly dreaming about you—I fancy it must be so—so —well, I really don't exactly know what to call it.

Hilde. Perhaps you mean—fascinating?

Lyngstrand. Fascinating! Oh, yes! Fascinating was what I meant, or something like it. (*Looks at her for a moment.*) You are so clever, Miss Hilde. Really you

are very clever. When I come home again you'll be about the same age as your sister is now. Perhaps, too, you'll look like your sister looks now. And perhaps, too, you'll be of the same mind she is now. Then, perhaps, you'll be both yourself and your sister—in one form, so to say.

Hilde. Would you like that?

Lyngstrand. I hardly know. Yes; I almost think I should. But now, for this summer, I would rather you were like yourself alone, and exactly as you are.

Hilde. Do you like me best as I am?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I like you immensely as you are.

Hilde. Hm. Tell me, you who are an artist, do you think I'm right always to wear bright-coloured summer dresses?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I think you're quite right!

Hilde. You think bright colours suit me, then?

Lyngstrand. They suit you charmingly — to my taste.

Hilde. But tell me, as an artist, how do you think I should look in black?

Lyngstrand. In black, Miss Hilde?

Hilde. Yes, all in black. Do you think I should look well?

Lyngstrand. Black's hardly suitable for the summer. However, you'd probably look remarkably well in black, especially with your appearance.

Hilde (*looking straight in front of her*). All in black, up to the throat; black frilling round that, black gloves, and a long black veil hanging down behind.

Lyngstrand. If you were dressed so, Miss Hilde, I should wish I were a painter, and I'd paint you as a young, beautiful, sorrowing widow!

Hilde. Or as a young, sorrowing, betrothed girl!

Lyngstrand. Yes, that would be better still. But you can't wish to be dressed like that?

Hilde. I hardly know; but I think it's fascinating.

Lyngstrand. Fascinating?

Hilde. Fascinating to think of, yes. (*Suddenly pointing to the left*). Oh, just look *there!*

Lyngstrand (*looking*). The great English steamer; and right by the pier!

(WANGEL *and* ELLIDA *come in past the pond.*)

Wangel. No; I assure you, dear Ellida, you are mistaken. (*Seeing the others.*) What, are you two here? It's not in sight yet; is it, Mr. Lyngstrand?

Lyngstrand. The great English ship?

Wangel. Yes.

Lyngstrand (*pointing*). There she is already, doctor.

Ellida. I knew it.

Wangel. Come!

Lyngstrand. Come like a thief in the night, as one might say, so quietly and noiselessly.

Wangel. You must go to the pier with Hilde. Be quick! I'm sure she wants to hear the music.

Lyngstrand. Yes; we were just going there, doctor.

Wangel. Perhaps we'll follow you. We'll come directly.

Hilde (*whispering to* LYNGSTRAND). They're hunting in couples, too!

(HILDE *and* LYNGSTRAND *go out through the garden. Music is heard in the distance out at the fjord during the following.*)

Ellida. Come! He is here! Yes, yes—I feel it.

Wangel. You'd better go in, Ellida. Let me talk with him alone.

Ellida. Oh! that's impossible—impossible, I say. (*With a cry.*) Ah! do you see him, Wangel?

((The STRANGER *enters from the left, and remains on the pathway outside the fence.*)

The Stranger (*bowing*). Good evening. You see I am here again, Ellida.

Ellida. Yes, yes. The time has come now.

The Stranger. And are you ready to start, or not?

Wangel. You can see for yourself that she is not.

The Stranger. I'm not asking about a travelling dress, or anything of that kind, nor about packed trunks. All that is needed for a journey I have with me on board. I've also secured a cabin for her. (*To Ellida.*) So I ask

you if you are ready to go with me, to go with me—freely?

Ellida. Oh! do not ask me! Do not tempt me!

(*A ship's bell is heard in the distance.*)

The Stranger. That is the first bell for going on board. Now you must say "Yes" or "No."

Ellida (*wringing her hands*). To decide—decide for one's whole life. Never to be able to undo it again!

The Stranger. Never. In half an hour it will be too late.

Ellida (*looking shyly and searchingly at him*). Why is it you hold to me so resolutely?

The Stranger. Don't you feel, as I do, that we two belong together?

Ellida. Do you mean because of the vow?

The Stranger. Vows bind no one, neither man nor woman. If I hold so steadfastly to you, it is because I *cannot* do otherwise.

Ellida (*in a low, trembling voice*). Why didn't you come before?

Wangel. Ellida!

Ellida (*bursting out*). Ah! All that attracts, and tempts, and lures into the unknown! All the strength of the sea concentrated in this one thing!

(The STRANGER *climbs over the fence.*)

Ellida (*stepping back to* WANGEL). What is it? What do you want?

The Stranger. I see it and I hear it in you, Ellida. After all, you will choose me in the end.

Wangel (*going towards him*). My wife has no choice here. I am here both to choose for her and to defend her. Yes, defend! If you do not go away from here—away from this land—and never come back again—Do you know to what you are exposing yourself?

Ellida. No, no, Wangel, not that!

The Stranger. What will you do to me?

Wangel. I will have you arrested as a criminal, at once, before you go on board; for I know all about the murder at Skjoldviken.

Ellida. Ah! Wangel, how can you?

The Stranger. I was prepared for that, and so—(*takes a revolver from his breast pocket*)—I provided myself with this.

Ellida (*throwing herself in front of him*). No, no; do not kill him! better kill me!

The Stranger. Neither you nor him, don't fear that. This is for myself, for I will live and die a free man.

Ellida (*with growing excitement*). Wangel, let me tell you this—tell it you so that he may hear it. You can indeed keep me here! You have the means and the power to do it. And you intend to do it. But my mind—all my thoughts, all the longings and desires of my soul—these you cannot bind! These will rush and press out into the unknown that I was created for, and that you have kept from me!

Wangel (*in quiet sorrow*). I see it, Ellida. Step by step you are slipping from me. The craving for the boundless, the infinite, the unattainable will drive your soul into the darkness of night at last.

Ellida. Yes! I feel it hovering over me like black noiseless wings.

Wangel. It shall not come to that. No other deliverance is possible for you. I at least can see no other. And so—so I cry off our bargain at once. Now you can choose your own path in perfect—perfect freedom.

Ellida (*stares at him a while as if stricken dumb*). Is it true—true what you say? Do you mean that—mean it with all your heart?

Wangel. Yes—with all my sorrowing heart—I mean it.

Ellida. And can you do it? Can you let it be so?

Wangel. Yes, I can. Because I love you so dearly.

Ellida (*in a low, trembling voice*). And have I come so near—so close to you?

Wangel. The years and the living together have done that.

Ellida (*clasping her hands together*). And I—who so little understood this!

Wangel. Your thoughts went elsewhere. And now—now you are completely free of me and mine—and—and mine. Now your own true life may resume its real bent

again, for now you can choose in freedom, and on your own responsibility, Ellida.

Ellida (*clasps her head with her hands, and stares at* WANGEL). In freedom, and on my own responsibility! Responsibility, too? That changes everything.

(*The ship bell rings again.*)

The Stranger. Do you hear, Ellida? It has rung now for the last time. Come.

Ellida (*turns towards him, looks firmly at him, and speaks in a resolute voice*). I shall never go with you after this!

The Stranger. You will not!

Ellida (*clinging to* WANGEL). I shall never go away from you after this.

Wangel. Ellida, Ellida!

The Stranger. So it is over?

Ellida. Yes. Over for all time.

The Stranger. I see. There is something here stronger than my will.

Ellida. Your will has not a shadow of power over me any longer. To me you are as one dead—who has come home from the sea, and who returns to it again. I no longer dread you. And I am no longer drawn to you.

The Stranger. Good-bye, Mrs. Wangel! (*He swings himself over the fence.*) Henceforth you are nothing but a shipwreck in my life that I have tided over. (*He goes out.*)

Wangel (*looks at her for a while*). Ellida, your mind is like the sea—it has ebb and flow. Whence came the change?

Ellida. Ah! don't you understand that the change came—was *bound* to come when I could choose in freedom?

Wangel. And the unknown?—It no longer lures you?

Ellida. Neither lures nor frightens me. I could have seen it—gone out into it, if only I myself had willed it. I could have chosen it. And that is why I could also renounce it.

Wangel. I begin to understand little by little. You

think and conceive in pictures—in visible figures. Your longing and aching for the sea, your attraction towards this strange man, these were the expression of an awakening and growing desire for freedom; nothing else.

Ellida. I don't know about that. But you have been a good physician for me. You found, and you *dared* to use the right remedy—the only one that could help me.

Wangel. Yes, in utmost need and danger we doctors dare much. And now you are coming back to me again, Ellida?

Ellida. Yes, dear, faithful Wangel—now I am coming back to you again. Now I can. For now I come to you freely, and on my own responsibility.

Wangel (*looks lovingly at her*). Ellida! Ellida! To think that now we can live wholly for one another—

Ellida. And with common memories. Yours, as well as mine.

Wangel. Yes, indeed, dear.

Ellida. And for our children, Wangel?

Wangel. You call them *ours!*

Ellida. They who are not mine yet, but whom I shall win.

Wangel. Ours! (*Gladly and quickly kisses her hands.*) I cannot speak my thanks for those words!

(HILDE, BALLESTED, LYNGSTRAND, ARNHOLM, *and* BOLETTE *come into the garden. At the same time a number of young townspeople and visitors pass along the footpath.*)

Hilde (*aside to* LYNGSTRAND). See! Why, she and father look exactly as if they were a betrothed couple!

Ballested (*who has overheard*). It is summer-time, little Missie.

Arnholm (*looking at* WANGEL *and* ELLIDA). The English steamer is putting off.

Bolette (*going to the fence*). You can see her best from here.

Lyngstrand. The last voyage this year.

Ballested. Soon all the sea-highways will be closed, as the poet says. It is sad, Mrs. Wangel. And now we're

to lose you also for a time. To-morrow you're off to Skjoldviken, I hear.

Wangel. No; nothing will come of that. We two have changed our minds—to-night.

Arnholm (*looking from one to the other*). Oh!—really!

Bolette (*coming forward*). Father, is that true?

Hilde (*going towards* ELLIDA). Are you going to stay with us after all?

Ellida. Yes, dear Hilde, if you'll have me.

Hilde (*struggling between tears and laughter*). Fancy! Have you!

Arnholm (*to* ELLIDA). But this is quite a surprise—

Ellida (*smiling earnestly*). Well, you see, Mr. Arnholm— Do you remember we talked about it yesterday? When you have once become a land creature you can no longer find your way back again to the sea, nor to the sea-life either.

Ballested. Why, that's exactly the case with my mermaid.

Ellida. Something like—yes.

Ballested. Only with this difference — that the mermaid dies of it, while human beings can acclam—acclimatise themselves. Yes, yes. I assure you, Mrs. Wangel, they *can* ac-cli-matise themselves.

Ellida. In freedom they can, Mr. Ballested.

Wangel. And when they act on their own responsibility, dear Ellida.

Ellida (*quickly holding out her hand to him*). Exactly.

(*The great steamer glides noiselessly out beyond the fjord. The music is heard nearer land.*)

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